

# A Year of Action: My Newsletter in 2021

*Some headlines from the first three newsletters of the year:*

## **Welcoming a new year: abandoned scrolls, libraries, and beyond!**

This is the first newsletter of 2021. There will talk, as always, about archives and libraries, but also on much more, so be ready for that, my fellow readers.

Burkely Hermann  
Jan 3, 2021



## **Positivity, libraries, hashtags, and more**

This week's newsletter will focus on archives and libraries like always, noting some blogposts I put out in the past week and a new article in I Love Libraries. Enjoy!

Burkely Hermann  
Jan 10, 2021



## **FOIA, libraries, archives, family history, and so much more**

This week's newsletter will, like always, focus on libraries and archives, but will also talk about genealogy, government transparency, and defining censorship

Burkely Hermann  
Jan 16, 2021



By Burkely Hermann

## Introduction

Hello all! After Substack [went down temporarily](#) in August 2022, I realized that [my previous publication](#) of past newsletter issues only went up to the last issue in 2020. So, I decided to continue that, starting with a publication for all the issues in 2021. Unfortunately, unlike my last publication, I no longer have a subscription to Microsoft Office, so I had to compose this in Google Docs Instead. As it turned out, this publication was five pages longer than my previous one, meaning I wrote more in 2021 for the newsletter than I did in 2019 and 2020 combined!

With that, I hope you enjoy this publication as much as it took me to put this together for you all.

Best regards,  
Burkely

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# Welcoming a new year: abandoned scrolls, libraries, and beyond!

This is the first newsletter of 2021. There will be talk, as always, about archives and libraries, but also talk on much more, so be ready for that, my fellow readers.

*[Newsletter originally published [on Jan. 3, 2021](#)]*



*Confronting the year with determination: Frida and Kaisa (the Librarian) in the newest season of Hilda*

Hello everyone and happy 2021! This is the first newsletter of the new year and I have so much to talk about! I have a review of *Hilda* coming up this month on *I Love Libraries* and I have a few recent reviews I wrote in the past week about libraries and archives I'd share with you all. I am continually grateful that Jennifer Snoek-Brown added more entries which I suggested on [her list](#) of TV series, animated and live-action, and I'll be writing an article and/or doing an interview with her later this year! So that's great news. With that, let me begin the newsletter!

Let me start with two articles on my own blogs. Yesterday I [published a post](#) about archivists and abandoned scrolls in *Tangled* (the series). Of course, no archivists are shown, but I thought it was interesting in terms of how much archival documents show up. I wish archivists had appeared, because the scrolls in the episodes had to be organized by someone! And a few days before that post [was another](#) about information gathering, knowledge, and more within libraries in various animated series, *Tangled*, *Amphibia*, and even *Soylent Green*. I am also very

excited by the article I [published in Pop Culture Maniacs](#) which focused on LGBTQ representation in animated series 2020, looking forward. Here's an excerpt from that article:

In the past year, various series have premiered on broadcast television and streaming platforms with LGBTQ characters and diverse casts...Despite the dismal events of 2020, these series are making a big impact when it comes to interesting, strong, and complicated stories for LGBTQ characters, and should be praised for that, regardless of whether the shows are aimed at young adults, children, or mature adults. Three big animated series ended this year: *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, *Kipo and the Age of Wonderbeasts*, and *Steven Universe Future*...And, perhaps the most interesting intersection of gender and sexuality in 2020 was the episode "Obsidian" of *Adventure Time: Distant Lands*, which focused on the relationship between a bisexual woman Marceline "Marcy" the Vampire Queen and Princess Bonnibel "Bonnie" Bubblegum, of a not-yet-known sexual orientation...So, there's a lot to look forward to in 2021 in terms of animated series

It's a definite must read!

With that, let me talk first about archives. NARA blogs talked about [the presidential transition](#), the [Henry Peabody collection](#), [Chuck Yeager](#), and most fascinating of all, [securing the vote in the U.S. Virgin Islands](#)! While those were fascinating, I thought the same when it came to the articles about [cataloging in the time of COVID-19](#), the Hollywood archivist, Lillian Michelson, [donating](#) their library to the Internet Archive. I further enjoyed reading Margot Note's article titled "[How to be a better researcher](#)," something that we can all learn from, the [archivist on a quest](#) to preserve literature of the marginalized, and [upcoming Smithsonian museums](#) for women's history and Latinos! Not sure where they will be in D.C., but that's great to hear. At the same time, it was inspiring to read the Vermont state archivist talk [about their tweet threads](#) highlighting records in their collections about the 1918-20 flu pandemic, the LGBTQ game archive [documenting the history](#) of queer video games, a former archivist noting how they found out that the town [had been using the wrong dates](#) of the town's founding by looking...at the documents! It was worrisome to read articles about the Presidential Records Act [not being followed](#), how White House records [may be trashed](#) by the 'Rump before his departure from the White House, and the bad archivist from NARA [who pocketed money for TEN YEARS](#) from a German company for digitizing film records which were provided to the public for free! Yeah, that's pretty bad. And this person even got a lifetime award from them. I hope after this they take away his award. At the same time, I liked [hearing the introduction](#) [from] the Reclaim the Records organization, even as I saw [the SAA's action item](#) to Senators on the "Educating for Democracy Act of 2020," which will give more money to history and civics education. Finally, I'd like to object to a mentality noted [in a Nature article](#) about what "COVID archivists" are keeping for historians in the future, "the tendency today has therefore been to collect everything, within each organization's broad remit." Anyone that thinks it makes sense to collect everything is bonkers, because that is not a sound strategy (and the archival field [has soundly rejected it](#)). Only certain materials, sites, initiatives, and so on should be preserved. Archivists should never be preserving everything of any event, under any circumstance. It would be too much to handle and there would never be the resources or labor to such collecting on a mass scale anyhow.



*Twilight's personal library shown in the first episode of My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, which she uses to discover the truth behind an ancient prophecy*

With that, let me talk about libraries. Thanks to an email (or text) from my dad, [an article which talked about women who rode miles on horseback](#) to deliver library books! Now, that's what I call dedication! There were, as always, a number of helpful articles from *Hack Library School* about how to be [a student planner](#), what you should know [before beginning grad school](#), how you can be in library school...[without a library](#), and how to [talk about structural racism](#). I came across other articles about a library which hired a social worker in order to [help residents](#), how [libraries support nonprofits](#), how to [transform a library on a small budget](#) (although you should have a bigger budget), and a number of films which have [joined the Library of Congress's National Film Registry](#)! Again, if you have suggestions for them, feel free to tell them directly, as they have a [handy nomination form](#), and more information about the nominations [here](#). It is a list which should be expanded.

In the last part of this newsletter, I'd like to focus on stories which are often important but don't fit neatly into the categories of archives or libraries. One of those includes a post about [topical maps](#), while others talk about [Harriet Tubman](#), [enslaved labor and the British Royal Navy](#) from 1790-1820, and [old cars](#). Apart from this, there were articles about [collecting materials](#), [Augusta Savage](#) (the only Black woman who made art for the 1939 World's Fair), the biggest [literary scandals of 2020](#), and ancient remains which prove that "there were more gender-equal roles in ancient tribes than modern scholars thought," [meaning that sexual division of labor at the time was "fundamentally different" — likely more equitable](#) unlike society today.

That concludes my newsletter. I hope you all have a great weekend and week to come.

- Burkely

# Positivity, libraries, hashtags, and more

This week's newsletter will focus on archives and libraries like always, noting some blogposts I put out in the past week and a new article in *I Love Libraries*. Enjoy!

[Newsletter originally published [on Jan. 10, 2021](#)]



*The librarian riding a vacuum like a skateboard in the recent season of Hilda, which I talk about in this newsletter*

Hello everyone! I know this week has been a tough one with the storming of the U.S. Capitol this past Wednesday by right-wing extremists and the fallout around that. I could go on about that, but I'd like to focus on something else which is more positive. This past week, [my article in \*I Love Libraries\*](#) got published, reviewing one of my favorite characters in the animated series, *Hilda*. Here's an excerpt from that article:

...*Hilda* continues to show the value of libraries and librarians, remaining one of the best animated depictions of the profession...the episode shows the value of libraries, proper organization, and knowledge itself...the protagonists...sneak into the library on a mission to fix the tide mice problem...[the librarian] catches them but decides to help them with their quest....In one particularly delightful moment, she uses her magic powers to ride a vacuum cleaner like a skateboard.

Coincidentally, *Ghostbusters* begins with a famous scene in the New York Public Library...[the librarian] goes beyond her normal responsibilities to aid her patrons, making clear the importance of librarians and libraries.

I would say the name of the librarian here, but you'll have to watch the series to find that one out! Building on that post, I [published a piece](#) about secret rooms, the Witches Tower, and archives in the series on my blog reviewing archives in popular culture. Apart from this, I posted [a short article](#) highlighting comedy and fun in libraries within three Western animations, and a post asking [whether my ancestor, John H. Packard](#), was one of the best surgeons in West Philly, or not. With that addressed, let me move to the next part of my newsletter with a renewed vigor!

Starting with archives, I came across [an article in the New York Times](#) about the archives hashtag party organized by NARA, where archives share images of records from their collections in order to promote the value of archives! I missed the one late last year, but there's one coming up next month (on February 5), and you can view what archives have posted in the past [here](#). I'd also like to point to Dara A. Baker, a long-time archivist for NARA, who talks about archives "[in the age of COVID](#)" in the *International Journal of Naval History*, and Deborah S. Davis emphasizing the importance of having a successful archives and special collections program "[through constant advocacy](#)." At the same time, there were posts about [archival innovators](#) and what NARA [did in 2020](#), including: fighting COVID; new finding aids for Bureau of Indian Affairs Photographs, indigenous treaties, presidential libraries, and voting rights; more citizen archivist contributions; a virtual July 4 celebration; posting more on YouTube; a new social media strategy; posting Electoral College documents online and making them publicly accessible; and celebrating the 19th Amendment. Finally, NARA's history hub [somewhat answered](#) a question about when U.S. government documents began to be typewritten and NARA put together [a set of frequently asked questions](#) about dual citizenship.

This leads me to libraries. As always, *Hack Library School* had posts about things librarians [should be learning](#) about copyright, [preparing for a semester](#) in library school, and [the declaration](#) that 2021 should be the year "you take action." This article claims that you should pick "one problem" to focus on in 2021, "educate yourself," "donate money," "contact your representative," "join a group," and "be a leader." While this is supposed to be surprising, this is a very limited set of options which should be much broader and acknowledge that not everyone wants to make more friends or is extroverted, meaning they likely wouldn't want to join a group or be a leader. Besides, donating money and contacting your representative can only go so far and "educating yourself" goes far beyond anti-racism and individual action which the writer seems to be implying, showing their limited perspective. Anyway, moving on beyond that individualistic article, *American Libraries* has a wonderful piece about how [libraries promote ethical care of indigenous collections](#), the New York Public Library [wrote](#) about vintage New Years' postcards, and the ALA [welcomed](#) an increase to the IMLS (Institute of Museum & Library Services) in the recent congressional appropriations bill. At the same time, [some said](#) that librarians should be prioritized in vaccine plans and the CEO of the New York Public Library, Anthony Marx, [pointed out](#) the hard lessons libraries and everyone else can take from the pandemic. Before ending this paragraph, I'd like to note the Library of Congress's [By the People campaigns](#) which ask for citizen contributors on various topics, such as:

- Papers from Allan Lomax
- Walt Whitman
- Suffragists

- Frederick Hockley
- Anna E. Dickinson
- Mary Church Terrell
- Letters to Teddy Roosevelt
- Spanish legal documents
- Clara Barton
- Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- Letters to Lincoln
- Susan B. Anthony
- the Revolutionary War
- Civil War soldiers
- Carrie Chapman Catt
- Rosa Parks

There are many others, but I'd recommend looking through these, especially the ones that aren't done, and doing some transcription to help out.

I have some other stories to mention before I close this newsletter. Jeannette Holland Austin [wrote about](#) lost census records, Margot Note will talk about creating family archives in a webinar [on February 18](#), and [recovering the lost works](#) of female renaissance artists. In addition, there were stories about how computer science students are [drawn to translating Sanskrit](#), efforts to [save the burial ground](#) of Marian Anderson and other Black Philadelphians, and [how Black women](#) changed the face of education in America. I also enjoyed reading about how the comics industry [avoided an implosion](#) in 2020, Simon & Schuster [canceling](#) the publication of Josh Hawley's book, after he supported the storming of the Capitol, and William Hogeland talked about [the worst election in history](#): the 1876 election!

That's it for this newsletter. I hope you all have a productive week to come!

- Burkely

# FOIA, libraries, archives, family history, and so much more

This week's newsletter will, like always, focus on libraries and archives, but will also talk about genealogy, government transparency, and defining censorship

*[Newsletter originally published on [Jan. 16, 2021](#)]*



*This newsletter is a break from the usual work drudgery, like that shown in an episode of Hilda, as Kaisa (the Librarian), Hilda, Frida, and Twig watch worryingly*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all enjoying your week. The National Security Archive, where I work, is really on top of things, [put together a sourcebook of documents](#) about the riot/insurrection (or whatever you want to call it) at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, and I'm excited to see where this project will lead, what documents they'll uncover. Anyway, let me move forward with the rest of my newsletter, with a focus on archives, and libraries, as always, along with other topics.

I published three posts in the past week, on libraries, archives, and even genealogy! I wrote about the prevalence, in the French animated series, *LoliRock*, [of libraries time and time again, in the series](#). They are definitely shown to have value, even though no librarians are shown, sadly. Recently, I published [a post about archivy themes](#) in one of my favorite animated series, *Steven Universe*. While archives never show up per say, there are many instances where archive-like places are shown. I didn't talk about it in the post, but the Buddwick Public Library is

archiv in the sense that all the books were written by the town's founder, Buddy Buddwick, and the library serves as a repository of said books. Finally, a couple days ago I wrote about the story of three Irish women [who were servants first of a man named John H. Packard](#): Mary Hassan, Ellen McBride, and Bridget Walsh. While this post only scratched the surface, it is part of an effort I am taking to move my blog away from mainly writing about men and male narratives ([as I had in the past](#)), instead focusing on underprivileged people in society.

With that, I'd like to move past my posts and focus on stories in the world of archives and libraries. The Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero wrote posts [thanking Wikipedia for its birthday](#), noting how it can be important to archival work (in terms of adding in archival sources) and [penned a response](#) to what happened at the U.S. Capitol. I also enjoyed [reading the interview](#) with Mott Linn, the chief librarian of the National Security Research Center at Los Alamos, who is called a librarian but is really an archivist, and the [four-page newsletter](#) from the SAA's Security Section. Apart from this, some wrote about the value of making archival collections [visible](#), tips from an archivist [in organizing](#) your genealogy files, having archivists [further engage](#) with people online about records of enduring value, and the importance of [archival permanence](#). Vice had an article about how archivists (probably better called data analysts or something else in this case) are [preserving livestreams](#) of the events at the Capitol before they are deleted, and how the 1918-1920 pandemic ravaged indigenous reservations [across the country](#). On another note, I recently learned about the Black Archives of Kansas City, which dedicates itself to [collect, preserve, and make available](#) materials which document "the social, economic, political and cultural histories of persons of African American descent in the central United States, with particular emphasis in the Kansas City, Missouri region." What a great idea! It was founded by a man, [Horace M. Peterson III](#), who interned at the precursor to NARA, the National Record Center in Kansas City, and the J. Paul Getty Museum Management Institute, later becoming an expert in Black history and Missouri folklore. At the same time, I learned about the new website of the [SAA's Visual Materials Section](#), called Views, with book reviews, in-depth analysis, new publications, and more.

### [We the People \(ca. 1972\)](#)

#### *NARA record about 1970 census*

I'd also like to share a story [from the Virginia Mercury](#) about a Virginia attorney, Hassan Ahmad, trying to seek sealed papers of a well-known anti-immigrant activist, John Taunton (a friend of Steve Bannon and Kris Kobach), who died in 2019, using FOIA to try and get the papers, held by the University of Michigan, unsealed, but this request was denied until 2035, with the issue now before the Michigan Supreme Court. Ahmad wondered what it would mean for his immigrant clients and law practice, trying to find out what was in the 10 sealed boxes Taunton gave to the university. His lawsuit was initially dismissed by the Michigan Court of Claims, but in July 2019, the Michigan Court of Appeals reversed that decision, "ruling that the sealed documents are public records and should be made available." The University argued that they appealed this case because they claimed that would-be donors would be "deterred from donating private records of historical significance to a historical library at a public university, in this case, the Bentley Historical Library," and claimed it would "FOIA's purpose of enhancing

public access to information.” In contrast, Ahmad said that this is an issue of government transparency, said it makes little sense that the university claims it is worried about a “potential chilling effect,” adding that he believes that the papers are public records subject to FOIA, and said that it is “high time that they be called to task for where they actually came from.” I’d say he has a valid point there and if he wins this case, it will open the doors for those in other states to ask for the same. If he loses, then that would be a win for the Tauntons of the world and a loss for government transparency, I’d say.

With that, let me talk a bit about libraries. *Hack Library School*, as always, has some great posts about [skills as a librarian](#), [what you should know](#) if you work in a public library, [facing your stereotypes](#), and [structural racism](#). Additionally, *I Love Libraries* had [a post](#) about 10 of America’s “favorite librarians,” an article in *Publishers Weekly* said that local public libraries [connect](#) the “threads of literacy, learning, and community welfare,” and the ALA released a statement [condemning violence at the Capitol](#). Also, the Internet Archive [released](#) an online library explorer to allow people to browse books of various subjects and areas from their computers. The Library of Congress had blogs about [advanced searches](#) on Congress.gov, the [right of privacy](#) (and contact tracing), and [the art of the book](#).

There are some other topics I’d like to note before ending this newsletter. Larry M. Elkin [wrote about](#) how censorship should be defined before it is denounced. He first stated that it is not censorship for opinion editors of the *New York Times* to not publish your essay, but is a form of judgment, with censorship occurring only when “the government restricts or compels expression under threat of penalties, which may be administrative, judicial or extrajudicial.” He further pointed out that the First Amendment does not offer anyone a right to Facebook access, meaning it can publish or not publish what it wants, even though there are some legal remedies, saying that freedom of the press means people have a right to publish anything you want, but it doesn’t mean that the “manufacturer of a press must agree to sell you one.” He added that press freedoms in the U.S. are not absolute, the role of the “safe harbor” in stopping platforms from being liable for copyright infringement and defamation, said that we aren’t hearing from those who advocate net neutrality as much as in the past, saying some lessons are being absorbed about the role of private parties to “determine how their privately funded facilities are used,” and not the value of defining censorship. Other than that essay by Elkin, Jeannette Austin wrote about [ancestors from England](#), two historians [noted a starting point](#) in teaching about what happened at the Capitol in classrooms, Megan Kate Nelson talked about how historians are [contextualizing](#) the events at the Capitol, and Richard Ovenden talked about [the value](#) of archives (despite citing noted anti-communists like George Orwell). In the past week, I read, as well, about [people trying to request](#) documents from police departments about vacation days used by police during the Capitol riots, and a big science publisher Springer Nature [going open access](#) and what that means.

That’s all for this week. Hope everyone has a good weekend and week to come!

- Burkely

# Newsletters, libraries, archives, genealogy, and everything nice

This week I'll tell you about a 243-page e-book reprinting my old newsletters, pop culture reviews of libraries & archives, family history narratives, and other news items which pique your interest!

*[Newsletter originally published [on Jan. 24, 2021](#)]*



*Just a happy image of Kaisa, the librarian, in Hilda, winking to brighten your day*

Hello everyone! I hope you had a productive week, even with everything that is happening right now. A couple days ago, I [published an e-book on the Internet Archive](#) which compiles all newsletters from April 2019 to December 2020, so that's exciting! I learned a lot in putting it together and how to make this newsletter better going forward. I also published posts on each of my respective blogs. One continued my series about [romance in library settings](#), while another talked [about archives](#) in *Carmen Sandiego*. The latter post is connected to [a review](#) of family history themes in the last season of *Carmen Sandiego* which were not part of the main plot, but still important. I further published a post examining [the unusual story of one of my ancestors](#), Alaska Packard Davidson, the first female FBI agent, a suffragist, one-time factory owner, and sister of the two men who created the Packard car company. Just as important was a post about [one of my ancestors from Transylvania](#) (no vampires here!), Michael Hermann, titled "Michael Hermann was from Hungary...but where in Hungary?"

Let me continue onward with some discussion of archives. The National Security Archive noted how [Biden is making the White House visitor logs available](#), as opposed to what the former administration has done, and about a secret agreement between the Netherlands and the U.S. to [keep nukes in the Netherlands](#) beginning in 1960. Apart from that, the *Virginia Gazette* had a story about a woman digitizing *Virginia Gazette* articles from 1893 to 1925, [creating a unique, and free, resource](#). Additionally, the National Archives Museum had an online exhibition about [George Washington's First Inaugural Address](#), Margot Note wrote about [archival values](#) and an [archival CMS](#), while Jillian Lohndorf and Sylvie Rollason-Cass [talked about](#) collection development with COVID-19 content, and the Society of California Archivists [published their newsletter](#), talking about photographs of farmworkers in the Central Valley of California, digitization of tapes from a local music festival, a new archival collections database, an archives in Sonoma County coming close to being destroyed by a recent fire, the lack of unionization among Californian archivists, and other news items. At the same time, historian Sophie White mentioned how [archives helped her](#) with her research about enslaved people and Black history in general, while historian Daryl Williams, editor of the [Journal on Slavery and Data Preservation](#), said that "continental Africans and people of the Diaspora" have their fullness "denied them by the archives of the transatlantic trade."

With that, let me talk about libraries. *I Love Libraries* had articles about [supporting diverse books](#) and [creative ways](#) that libraries have adapted in the COVID era. *Hack Library School*, for their part, noted the [value of librarianship](#), [lessons learned](#) from an online semester of library school, and how to develop professional relationships [with LIS faculty and students](#). CripLib had a discussion about [the intersections](#) of fatphobia and disability, the Cleveland Public Library [announced](#) that it was beginning a free words on wheels program, and Serena Troshynski of the NYPL [wrote about](#) the unknown history of Hart Island. Finally, the Library of Congress had blogs about additions to [their Chronicling America resource](#), George Washington's 1789 [Oath of Office](#), Lincoln's 1865 [inauguration speech](#), and upcoming opportunities [to connect](#) with the Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division.

There are a number of other articles that get honorable mention this week. This starts with those about genealogy, specifically about [researching the lost state of Franklin](#) and [finding Irish ancestors](#). Just as fascinating was a story in *Defector* about the person who took a picture of a famous World Cup shot [has been forgotten](#) due to another photographer claiming credit for it and profiting off it and the [strange world of copyright law](#). In contrast to [my post last week](#) from Larry M. Elkin, was the perspective of the Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF), a [non-profit](#) which is [backed](#) by Google, which [grumbled](#) about "forums for speech or speakers...taken offline altogether" and declared that "we can anticipate an escalating political battle between political factions and nation states to seize control" of parts of the "global digital infrastructure," going forward. Honestly, that battle that the EFF speaks about was inevitable even before the riot on January 6. What happened since then only reinforced the existing ability of social media companies to control spaces they have created. In sum, there's no need to stand up for the speech of bigots, racists, or the like, because they supposedly have a "right" to say awful things, especially on social media platforms. It just isn't worth your time to stand for their right to speak. Moving on, *Smithsonian* had articles about [inventing the alphabet](#), the [rise and fall](#) of America's lesbian bars, and archaeologists [unearthing](#) an Egyptian Queen's tomb and 13-Foot 'Book of

the Dead' scroll. *ProPublica* had an article about how Amazon's self-publishing arm [is a haven](#) for White supremacists, one person outlined [an oral history of Wikipedia](#), and the *Los Angeles Times* noted how streamers [are struggling](#) to overcome the "churn" where users get a subscription for a film or something else, then cancel their subscription, with the company trying to come up with ways to make users stay on their respective platforms.

With that, I bring my newsletter to a close and readers, I hope that all have a good week going forward.

- Burkely

# NARA, presidential records, archives, diversity, and beyond

This week's newsletter will focus on the value of archiving (especially of presidential records), the librarian profession, and other relevant news from the past week

*[Newsletter originally published on [Jan. 31, 2021](#)]*



*Jeffrey and Sara helping a library patron in the series *Too Loud**

Hello everyone! This week has been a relatively productive one for me and I hope it has been for all of you as well. I composed an article about the YouTube animated series called *Too Loud*, and submitted it to *I Love Libraries*, a series centered on two siblings with oversized heads (shown above) who work at a local library. I recently got accepted as a writer for the pop culture site, *The Geekiary*, for which I am composing my first review, and sent in two posts about librarians and archivists of color to [Reel Librarians](#), one of my favorite review blogs, run by Jennifer Snoek-Brown, a librarian in Washington State. Apart from that, I published posts [reviewing the value of libraries](#) in various animated series, [the “forbidden archives”](#) shown in one of my favorite anime, and a family history blog post which explains [the connection](#) between my ancestor, E.P.W. Packard, and Susan B. Anthony.

With that, let me begin! Archives Aware! had a [great piece interviewing](#) Rebecca Hankins on the Rich LGBTQ+ Collections Housed in Cushing Memorial Library and Archives at Texas A & M University, while *Mother Jones* [wrote about](#) how a forum run by supporters of the former traitorous U.S. president, scrubbed its archives of posts before the violent break-in at the Capitol. Then, [Politico reported on](#) the newly created presidential library for the former traitorous

president, [run by NARA](#). There isn't much there, but it is interesting that his personal Twitter account was NOT archived by NARA, so you have to go places [like this](#) to see the tweets. *Politico* explains that NARA "is working to make such accounts of administration officials, including the former president, "publicly available as soon as possible." I think it is a major oversight for them to [not archive](#) his personal Twitter account, because [there is a lot](#) of historical value in his awful, and bigoted, tweets. Maarja Krusten, a former NARA employee, [has noted](#) that "although presidential library often used loosely outside NARA for a library or museum, neither library or museum required by law" and Rachel Vagts, president of the Society of American Archivists, said there is a need now for "better funding for the National Archives, and a better culture of compliance with laws governing record-keeping," as [noted in an op-ed by Philip Kennicott](#), advocating for no presidential library for the former president. Apart from this, one of my colleagues [has said](#) that she hopes that "Trump is funding the digitization of records that will appear on the site – just as Barack Obama did – rather than forcing taxpayers to do so." I hope that is the case as well, since the library [won't take FOIA requests until 2026](#). Bob Clark, one of the critics of the Obama Library, [has declared](#) that there "will not be a presidential library. The era of those is over," while others [have doubted](#) that a brick-and-mortar building would be created and said that if he does build such a library it will be [a "shrine to his ego,"](#) and said that such a library [does not need](#) to be created. Other than this story, Margot Note [wrote about](#) archival user expectations, the ACOR digital archive which will cover a "range of thirteen countries across the Middle East and North Africa" with over 30,000 images, [was announced](#), and Sarah Barsness, a Digital Collections Archivist at the Minnesota Historical Society, [shared a manual](#) for digital archivists. I further enjoyed [reading the tribute](#) to Judge Juan Guzmán Tapia, the first Chilean judge to prosecute Pinochet for crimes, a post by archives technician Michael J. Hancock about [how the U.S. almost nuked itself](#) in January 1961, the [January/February issue](#) of *Archival Outlook*, and the website of the Peoples of the Historical Slave Trade database, [known as Enslaved](#). Otherwise, I was heartened to hear about [the lawsuit](#) from indigenous nations to keep NARA's Seattle facility from closing, with the Public Buildings Reform Board declaring in October (see page 21 of [the public meeting minutes](#)) that "the parcel is included in this group of high-value assets, and so the due diligence work is proceeding," and *The Guardian* [pointing out](#) in December that the move "could deprive indigenous people in the Pacific north-west of access to critical documents." I also loved the comment by Sam Cross, the Pop Archives guru, who said, at the end of [her review of Wonder Woman 1984](#), "...instead of watching *WW84*, go out and support your local archives. If you can, make a donation. If you can't, write a nice letter or let the parent institution know how much you and the community value the archives. It's the truth and the truth is beautiful." I agree with that wholeheartedly! Finally, I think [an article by archivist B. M. Watson](#) in *Perspectives of History* is relevant in telling people to stop calling things archives when they aren't archives:

Various disciplinary "archival turns" over the course of the past few decades have resulted in a tendency towards the over-casual use of the word "archive" as a shorthand to refer to, well, just about anything...Others have since pointed out that a flash drive is not an archive, that a website is not an archive, and that the internet is not an archive...nearly every year academic presses or journals publish collections of essays by historians reflecting on "the archive" and the role it plays in

the historical field. Most of these essays demonstrate a misunderstanding of what exactly archives are...As many historians currently use the word “archives,” they seem to imply that an archive is the natural state in which primary sources arrange themselves after being discarded or left by their creators. It creates the false impression that there is little to no work that goes into making primary sources available to researchers, and...that archives are even a neutral or unmoderated space...the invocation of “the archive” by historians enacts an ironic historical revisionism that reduces the labor of me and my...colleagues to reading room furniture...So invisible, in fact, that archivists, librarians, and others might not even appear in acknowledgments of the publications based on their collections.

Let me talk about libraries a little bit. *Hack Library School* had posts about getting a [student library job](#), [decentralizing romance in YA literature](#), and being [a rural librarian](#). At the same time, the Library of Congress had blogs about [microwaves](#), [holograph manuscripts](#), [georeferencing](#), and [a 15th century manuscript](#). Just as fascinating was David Vinjamuri and Joseph Huberty's article about what [a “post-pandemic library” would look like](#), a post about [libraries and the criminal “justice” system](#), and [how to study without library access at university](#). Similarly, reading about the “bird librarian,” Leah Tsang bringing “bird poisoners to justice as part of her role at Australia's oldest museum” was [an interesting article in Nature](#). Then there was an post, a couple days ago on Snoek-Brown's *Reel Librarians* where she [made a commitment](#) to writing about more librarians of color on her blog, which is something I'm trying to do in the coming year as well. It's definitely worth a read, and she notes that while “there has been an increase in representation onscreen in recent years...there's no way to sugar-coat the fact that there are *still* not that many cinematic representations of librarians of color,” even fewer who are major characters, while pointing to several books about the lack of diversity in the librarian profession.



*One of my favorite librarians in animation, Kaisa, in the latest season of Hilda. She is an example of good representation, but NOT diversity in that representation*

Now, there are a number of articles which get an honorable mention. A3 Genealogy had a post [about researching](#) Midwest German ancestors, while Jeannette Austin highlighted genealogy records for [Charles City County, Virginia](#), and finding ancestors [buried](#) in old graves and farms. On other topics, the newsletter by William Hogeland, a progressive historian, focusing on [the history of stealing an election](#) in the U.S., from Alexander Hamilton to Richard Nixon and beyond, a [history of sea shanties](#), a [flood revealing the shape](#) of an English Civil War fort, the Museum of Chinese in America [releasing an online portal](#) showing [some remaining records](#) over a year after a devastating fire destroyed many of their records, are worthy reads. It does concern me that the museum partnered with a corporation like Google rather than a public or community institution. I would say that is a big mistake on their part. The same can be said about an article about [price gouging over student e-books](#), the need, as one writer put it, [to "save books"](#) from those she calls the "book people," an article [guessing](#) that the future (when it comes to animation) will be "family-friendly" and an article, based on a discussion between the Native American Archives Section (NAAS) and the Human Rights Archives Section (HRAS), giving [recommendations](#) for decolonizing practices and welcoming indigenous researchers. At long last, *Perspectives on History* had an article about [the role of history courses](#) in general education.

With that, this newsletter comes to a close. Hope you all have a good week.

- Burkely

# NARA's Seattle facility, fictional works, archives, libraries, and beyond

This week I'll talk about a recent review I published in *I Love Libraries*, a mention of one of my articles in a lawsuit, a new story from my friend featuring a cool steampunk archivist, and more!

*[Newsletter originally published [on Feb. 7, 2021](#)]*

the Seattle facility are available online. According to Susan Karren, NARA's Seattle director, only ".001% of the facility's 56,000 cubic feet of records are digitized and available online."<sup>11</sup>

If the sale proceeds, the records will be inaccessible for an unknown period of time, as they will need to be inventoried, shipped, and reprocessed at their new sites.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, having to submit records requests from afar precludes requestors from browsing the records; the requestor may not know exactly which particular records they seek.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/human-rights-archives-section/more-than-a-warehouse-why-the-closure-of-seattles-national-arch>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.historyassociates.com/hai-advises-clients-to-plan-ahead-closure-of-the-national-archives-at-seattle-will-impact-litigation-research/>.

<sup>13</sup> NARA Press Release, Seattle Facility Approved for Closure (Jan. 27, 2020), <https://www.archives.gov/press/press-releases/2020/nr20-37>.

A screenshot of pages 45-46 of a lawsuit filed by the Attorney General of Washington State, [that cites my article!](#)

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. I'd like to report some wonderful news before moving into the rest of the newsletter. Earlier this week, Nico Colaleo, the creator of an animated web series titled *Too Loud*, [praised](#) my [recent review of the show in \*I Love Libraries\*](#) and how it represents libraries and librarians in a positive light, calling it "super cool...surprisingly meticulous, very thoughtful...[and] kind." I was so happy to see that! Today, I found out that the Attorney General of Washington State, cited my article in their lawsuit to stop the closure of NARA's Seattle facility. I'm glad that the articles I've been writing are making an impact! I've [put together a nice graphic](#) that shows all the groups that have joined this lawsuit, which are mostly indigenous groups, but also historians, museums, and other interested parties, for those who are interested. Finally, I'd like to mention [my friend's newest fictional work](#), which includes a non-binary Black archivist named Mx. Lawlor and describes steampunk-themed archives. In the story, the archivist shows the protagonists around the reading room and explains that the archives hold inactive records that have "a continuing, and long-term, historical

value." Along with lines in the story about how wearing white gloves is not needed to handle records, the archives ultimately becomes a crime scene of sorts by the end of the story. My friend said that their next fictional work will feature archives as well, even more prominently than this story. With that, let me move on with the rest of my newsletter.

Let's start with archives. The *American Archivist Reviews Portal* has a post about [the Syrian Archive](#), the *East Tennesseean* [talked about](#) the Archives of Appalachia, the *News Tribune* [noted](#) how the Missouri State Archives is going virtual for student's trips, and the Franklin County, Pennsylvania commissioners [announced](#) the kick-off of Phase II of an Archives Project. Caitlin Hucik wrote about finding family in images of liberation at Buchenwald [on The Unwritten Record](#) and some archivists [interviewed](#) Heather Briston, University Archivist at UCLA while Margot Note published posts on [acquisition, appraisal](#), and a [collections management system](#). This connects to what one archivist [notes](#): that "digitization is not digital preservation." Another archivist, Erin Lawrimore, adds that unless you have a preservation plan in place, [you can't](#) call something you have an "archives." I'll agree with that for sure. I'd like to end this section by pointing to [my recent post](#) which highlighted two archivists in webcomics and noting a post by the SAA's Electronic Records Section trying to answer a question as to whether [physical custody of digital archives is possible](#).

With that, we get to libraries. *Hack Library School* talked [about student membership](#) in a professional library association and [making the right decision](#) while *The Arcadiana Advocate* talked about the Lafayette Parish library. They noted how the library director [resigned](#) after library board members declared that a discussion of voting rights was too "far left," whatever that means. The [staff editorial](#) in the same publication argues that the public library board made an indefensible decision to not hold the program because local voters would be displeased and it was supposedly too "political," with the University of Louisiana agreeing to the program instead. The library board was clearly taking a reactionary decision here. Librarians are on a lot of trouble elsewhere in the state too. A [recent article](#) in *Scalawag* notes that in March 2020, the director of the New Orleans Public Library refused to shut down the 15 branches of the library, leading library workers to start petitions "pressuring the director to shut the place down" and they were successful, but calls to cut the library's budget loomed. Other than that, the *Canadian Journal of Academic Leadership* had an article examining absurd library bureaucracy "[through a Critical Race Theory Lens](#)," while other posts examined the [problem](#) with the research it yourself mantra, how librarians [require specialized skills](#) to be successful, the [importance](#) of public libraries, the [value](#) of information access, and the [story](#) of Chinese-Americans and the gold rush. I loved reading about the prickly meanings of the pineapple [from the Biodiversity Heritage Library](#) and the [role of librarians](#) in one of my favorite anime series, *Cardcaptor Sakura*.

I'd like to end this newsletter with a few articles. *Wired* [talked about](#) a quest to quash misinformation, the *Washington Post* [noted](#) the creation of new museums, which will be part of the Smithsonian, for Latino and women's history, *JSTOR* [noted](#) how the Civil War got its name, Norwich University talked about the [pandemic effects](#) on war and society over the course of world history, and History Associated focused on [the presidential transition](#) in 1860. In closing, I'd like to point to two stories in the *Perspectives of History* about research, curation, and design [remotely](#) and [why](#) historians do what they do. Hope everyone has a productive week ahead and

steps up to confront any challenges they have to face, hence the below video which is one of my favorite songs in *Elena of Avalor*. Enjoy!

<https://youtu.be/W5GkHPqy6Es>

- Burkely

# A mobile library, fictional archives, records preservation, genealogy, and more

This newsletter talks about some new articles I have in the process, my friend's new fictional work, the archives field, libraries, family history news, and so on.

*[Newsletter originally published on [February 14, 2021](#)]*



*Mira, her mongoose friends, her father, and others near a mobile library in a recent episode of the India-inspired series, Mira, Royal Detective*

Good afternoon! I hope everyone had a productive week. Happy Valentine's Day! While the failure of the impeachment of "our" former traitorous leader by the U.S. Senate is a disappointment, I'd like to share some positive news from the past week. I am glad to report that *I Love Libraries* accepted my article reviewing libraries in the all-ages animated series, *Mira, Royal Detective*. Similarly, my new post about the proposed closure of the Seattle Federal Records Center in *Issues & Advocacy* has been tentatively approved for publication by the SAA's *Issues & Advocacy* Section. Yesterday, my friend published a [new fictional work](#) which goes even further than their last one by directly emphasizing the importance of archives. In the story, my friend notes how the archives was moved above-ground from its previous underground location, dispelling the "basement archives" stereotype, making it more accessible,

that this archives has plans and rules in places to safeguard records, along with emergency planning, and possible restrictions. It's cool that the story also features records request forms, a historian in the archives who teaches at the local university and works at the archives, based on experience of the writer in working in an institutional archive, a massive research room lit by natural light, and stacks moved by wheels "resembling those on tall sailing ships." There's even a part about why wearing gloves to handle paper documents is not necessary, smashing yet another stereotype, this time of the white-glove-wearing-archivist. Finally, there is a scene where the historian tells one of the protagonists to destroy something rather than have the archives ingest it because "the archives do not and should not be collecting everything." The story also features a library, of course, because my friend said they couldn't resist adding it in. With that, I'd like to move onto the next part of my newsletter.

Let's start with archives. My fellow workers at NSA had some great posts about White House records from the former administration [being saved](#), weak enforcement of the Endangered Species Act [shown in FOIA requests](#), and two posts on February 2 and 10 about the mysterious "Havana syndrome" which sickened CIA and diplomatic personnel in Cuba, the causes of which are still not, yet, known. NARA's head archivist, David Ferriero [noted](#) that you can [subscribe](#) to a newsletter about the NARA catalog, while posts on *The Unwritten Record*, one of NARA's many WordPress blog sites, focused on various topics: [Civil War photographs](#), [genealogical inquiry](#), and [NASA trailblazers](#). At the same time, archivists on the blog of the Acquisitions & Appraisal Section of the SAA, [explained best practices](#) in diversifying one's collections, while Rachael Woody, a member of the SAA's Committee on Public Awareness [interviewed Elizabeth Stauber](#) after the Hogg Foundation Archives won an Advocacy Award. For my part, I published a post [about the value of archives](#) in popular culture. For those who are active on Twitter, or interested in discussions among archivists, I'd recommend [joining #archivehour](#) on the same day at 3:00-3:30 PM to discuss "how the archives and records sector can connect across the world." The same goes for the SNAP (Students and New Archives Professionals)'s snaprt chat on 8 PM EST on 2/25 [about digital skills](#) and accessing archival collections online. I'm really excited for it after sadly missing the first discussion of this year by SNAP.

Libraries have recently been in the news, even more than usual. For one, there was a [story in Teen Vogue](#) about the interconnection of libraries with policing, calling for a reduction/removal of police from the libraries, with a lively discussion about this [on the /r/Libraries subreddit](#), and criticism of the "Little Free Libraries" concept as self-gratification. I first heard about this [on a Twitter thread](#) posted by a person I follow, and [made my own](#) contributions. To learn more about this, I'd advise reading [the article](#) in *DCist* that spurned this discussion, the [criticism](#) of them in the *Journal of Radical Librarianship*, and a [related](#) BBC article. I have to agree with the criticism, especially that these supposed "libraries" are really book swaps and should be called as such. There is also a lot of chatter about a man named Cameron Williams who worked for the Chattanooga city library and a prominent activist within the Black Lives Matter movement in the city, who was "[charged with](#) burning books from the library written by conservative authors" with the library claiming he improperly removed the items. Now, that may sound bad, but consider what he has [said in his defense](#): that the books which had misinformation were already set to be removed from circulation, so he took them, with the library admitting that it was his job to weed out certain books. While we can be like those on [/r/books](#) or [/r/Libraries](#), decrying his action,

which makes sense, there is a lot of information about this case which is not known, as we still don't know the full story. If he had removed the books quietly and not burned them, I doubt there would have been an issue. Perhaps he could have done what [they did in \*Futurama\*](#) and flushed them down the toilet instead! Ha ha. Ok, not really, but that show does make a point about awful books being flushed down the sewers. On a related topic, *Hack Library School* came through this week with articles about [the inherent ableism](#) of being productive and [generalizing](#). Additionally, there were a myriad of posts on the Library Congress's blogs. These posts focused on [Black chemists](#), [early archaeology](#), [Black women](#), Black people [and the Gold Rush](#), and a Nicaraguan poet [named Rubén Darío](#). In other library news, the *School Library Journal* [had an article](#) about how librarians help students understand biased science literacy, *Publishers Weekly* [predicted](#) that this year will be "pivotal" for digital content in libraries, *Book Riot* stated that school librarians [are supporting](#) virtual learning, and I published a post [about libraries in \*The Simpsons\*](#).

I'll conclude this newsletter with a mention of some recent genealogy-related posts and articles about related subjects. When it came to family history, the blog *The Hidden Branch* [reblogged](#) a post [about the tragedy](#) in Australia's Yulin Reef and began a [new series](#) of blog posts interviewing "people who were young (early teens to early 20s) genealogists from different decades." Pauleen Cass, an Australian genealogist, had two interesting posts about [women and work](#) and another about [researching family history with books](#). I think the latter is even more vital than the former, although both are fascinating. I'd like to point to my newest family history post which reprints a family history I wrote in 2017 where I try to solve [the enigma of Michael's half-brother](#) Johann Hermann. In closing, I recently read [a story](#) about how online learning can threaten the privacy of students (no surprise there), along with posts guessing how the Founders [would feel](#) about the impeachment of the former president, the [YouTube experience](#), and remembrances of [a Maryland continental soldier](#).

If you made it this far and read the whole newsletter, then you should give yourself a pat on the back. Thanks. Happy Valentine's Day to you all:



*Naomi and Elena in the children's animated series, Elena of Avalor*

- Burkely

# Upcoming articles, NARA, archivists, libraries, and privileged genealogists

This week, like last week, I will be noting news from the archives and library fields, but also will discuss the value of archives, extreme "book love," and more!

*[Newsletter originally published on [Feb. 21, 2021](#)]*



*Mira serving as the librarian in an episode of Mira, Royal Detective*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good week. Before moving onto the rest of my newsletter I'd like to highlight some positives of the last week. For one, I wrote about [research within libraries](#) as shown in various animated series, and about well-known animated series with archives [but no archivists](#). Secondly, my article for *I Love Libraries* about the screenshot from the animation at the beginning of this post is upcoming in early March, while two posts for Jennifer Snoek-Brown's [Reel Librarians](#) are in the works as is a post about [the proposed closure](#) of the Seattle NARA facility for *Issues & Advocacy*. With that, I'll continue with the rest of this newsletter.

There are a lot of posts and articles about archives that I'd like to share with you all. My fellow colleagues at the National Security Archive [wrote about](#) the Able Archer War Scare in 1983 while *Archives Aware!* [talked about](#) using short videos for archival outreach, an archivist explained [an effort](#) by the University of Illinois to put in place a web archiving program, and

archival researchers rightly called for [NARA's budget to be increased](#). On that note are NARA blogs in the past week focusing on [government transparency](#), a [tribute to Cicely Tyson](#), [Black Americans](#) and the war industry, and graduations that never happened, like was the case of [Laura Ingalls Wilder in South Dakota](#). There were fascinating articles about [the race to save Black history archives](#), [preservation of photographic negatives](#), the [Collective Responsibility Labor Advocacy Toolkit](#), and the value of [preparing](#) for possible disasters when they strike archives. Just as important are articles on virtual deinstallation [during the pandemic](#), NARA's Citizen Archivist program [uplifting](#) stories of Black people, how Frederick Douglass [did some](#) of his anti-slavery work in Hingham, Massachusetts, [the newsletter](#) of the Archivists and Archives of Color, and [a review](#) by Samantha Cross of the short film "Dead Ink Archive." The prolific archival consultant, Margot Note, wrote about [seamless integration for archives](#), [crafting](#) an archival mission statement, and [achieving](#) business process integration in archives. Finally, the closing part of [the newsletter](#) of the Archives & Manuscripts Department at the University of Hawai'i (at Manoa) noted something that I've mentioned in this newsletter before:

There is a thrill in being able to satisfy an uncommon research request, but **archivists can't collect everything**, and furthermore can't always predict what the 'just-in-case' value of a particular collection will be decades into the future. When collections are rarely—if ever—used, it can lead us to wonder whether the need our predecessors predicted for that collection might have evaporated. So, when those rarely-used collections do get requested, **it reaffirms a more-expansive approach to collecting**. It also brings an opportunity to delve into areas we might otherwise have never thought to explore!

An interesting perspective from an archivist!

Let me move onto the related field of libraries. One librarian, in the past week, [asked why people are angry](#) when libraries reject their donated books. The whole thread made me think about a lot, especially as a person who donates books who has donated books to libraries. This connects, in a sense, to the story I wrote about last week. A part-time library specialist, Cameron Dequintez Williams, [who took books](#) written by the former president and Ann Coulter, reportedly burning them on a Facebook Live stream, saying that the library took the books and said he could take them. Of course, people are outraged about this, but it sounds more like a love of books equivalent to bibliolatry. Libraries should, and cannot, keep everything. If Williams had weeded the books instead of burning them, then likely this wouldn't have become an incident in the first place. Perhaps, that was his point. It's very different from that arch-conservative (and reactionary) White woman [who cried](#) about how she was stopped from rapping about libraries, being told it was cultural appropriation, declaring she was being "discriminated" for this. Yikes. Apart from these topics, the Library of Congress had posts about [Black funeral homes](#), [pruning search results](#) to find exactly what you are looking for, and an interview with an intern (Courtney Kennedy) [working on transcribing](#) centuries of Spanish legal documents. *Hack Library School* noted about asking in a library chat anonymously and [expectations of library knowledge](#), Snoek-Brown over at *Reel Librarians* [talked about](#) the role of librarians in the 2013 film, *Beautiful Creatures*, and readers sharing, to *I Love Libraries*, their [most cherished memories](#) of libraries. The Internet Archive, which defines itself as a digital

library rather than an archive, has [worked to make](#) the history of American newspapers searchable, has [over 2 million volumes](#) in its modern book collection, and noted [one of its employees](#) who scans in their books. Other articles noted how a teenager [helped launch](#) “seed libraries” in every state, [library re-opening strategies](#), weeding your books [like a librarian](#), [rural libraries](#) coming to the rescue in terms of the pandemic, the case of an Asian-American librarian, Ellen Ogihara, [resigning from St. Olaf College](#) in Northfield, Minnesota, citing discrimination and bias within the library at that college. Of course, people on the school’s subreddit [mocked](#) her concerns. She definitely should be supported and her case should be mentioned, as [other librarians](#), [educators](#), and [researchers have noted](#). At the same time, a new book by Jamaican-born library scholar Mark-Shane Scale, [Colonization and Imperialism in Libraries](#), notes how the legacy of colonialism and imperialism haunts the “world’s modern libraries” as he calls for an approach to “finally decolonize global libraries.” This is something which I am thinking of not only reading but writing [and] reviewing it [for] in an article for *American Libraries*.

<https://youtu.be/G1Z7Anc4Fj8>

That brings me to the next part of my newsletter, focusing on genealogy. When it comes to genealogy, I’d say that the [directory of military archival collections](#) could be very helpful, as could posts about [researching](#) railroad ancestors, [everyday streets](#), and [how seasons affected](#) those in the past. I enjoyed [reading the interview](#) with Kale Hobbes, a genealogist who has been doing research for nearly 50 years. There was something I saw which disturbed me in the past week: a Jewish genealogist, Caitlin Hollander, [claiming](#) that she has felt that she has “no place” in the genealogy field, that she constantly feels like she is “being silenced,” and was told that the stories of her ancestors “don’t matter.” She [also said](#) that she is [exhausted](#) with the “constant othering and the exclusionary microaggressions.” While I could have offered a hot take on her tweet, which had [an] almost universal “oh no, how could this happen to you” response from White genealogists, I decided to not do so to avoid an argument. Instead, I thought it better to deconstruct her tweet here. For one, Hollander’s comment comes from a LOT of White privilege as non-White genealogists have to work harder in their roots work and [the records themselves](#) favor White ancestors. There is undoubtedly anti-Semitism in the genealogy field, as there is in every field and part of our society in some form or another, but genealogy [has racism ingrained within it](#), since [the very beginning](#). This is why some have called for “[critical family history](#),” supported Jennifer Mendelsohn’s “[Resistance Genealogy](#),” and are working to have more progressive family histories. It’s not easy but it is possible, and it can be done. As Ellen Fernandez-Sacco [put it in 2016](#), the task for genealogists is to make it more visible, and end, “the historical erasure of difference (ethnic, race, gender, class) in the historical and genealogical record.” Related to this is Michelle Franzoni Thorley’s post, focusing on Black, indigenous, and other people of color, [saying that](#) internalized racism is hindering their roots work.

Then there is one final part of this newsletter of topics which don’t easily fit into the realms of libraries or archives, but are still worth mentioning, nonetheless. It was great to see the posts on *Perspectives of History* about the [illustrated envelope](#) of Eleanor Roosevelt, [a crusade for Black history](#), and the American Historical Association (AHA) [is opposing financial cuts](#) at the

University Press of Kansas. However, the AHA disappointed me in the past week. As I [pointed out on Twitter](#), while I understand [their concerns](#) about school renaming in San Francisco, since they are protecting the historian profession, they put out a reactionary, and snarky, statement. They declared that many of the rationales for renaming the schools from individuals who are bigoted, racist, or otherwise awful for one reason or another, are “misguided or riddled with errors of historical fact,” complaining about citing Wikipedia, and decried that the committee “showed little interest in consulting professional historians.” Perhaps that is for a reason? Even if everything they are saying is true, the statement has a tenor of elitism in it which I really don’t like and is very cringe-worthy on many levels. I’d have to stand with those wanting to rename the schools on this one. Sure, more public debate would be good. However, it would be better to involve actual people in the community than just professional historians. Who is to say that professional historians are always right? Or that they always do the best “serious research”? Anyway, this AHA statement appears to side with our former traitorous president, calling it [“ridiculous and unfair.”](#) Yikes. There are some other posts which need to be highlighted too. History Associates wrote about [the triumph](#) of public health in post-World War II New York, Alice Fleca [talked about](#) a feat of book binding design, a copyright lawyer [noted](#) how photographs you post online can be protected so you can maintain your copyright, Scalawag focused on how [a court victory changed](#) racist municipal policies in a small Georgia city and *Wired* mentioned the [Historical Dictionary of Science Fiction](#), [a resource to trace](#) the made-up words of sci-fi. JSTOR focused on the Zanj Rebellion, a remarkable episode of Medieval Islamic history where [a group of Black slaves in Africa](#), over a 15 year period (868 to 883 CE), built their own city, printed their own currency, and controlling their own polities. While there is a lot more to what happened, it is a story worth remembering, regardless.

With that, I hope you all have a productive week ahead. Until next time!

- Burkely

# Libraries, digital skills, fiction, archives, Black genealogy, and more

This week's newsletter includes stories about libraries and archives, along with my friend's new fiction with a non-binary archivist, the importance of roots work, and many other relevant stories

*[Newsletter originally published on [Feb. 27, 2021](#)]*



*Dhruv talks about the last book he read, in front of a mobile library in Mira, Royal Detective*

Hello everyone! I hope you all are having a good week. Not many updates this week to report, apart from a post I wrote about [more beautiful libraries](#) in animated series, another [about popular culture](#) and the duties of archivists and [a new discussion](#) by the SNAP section of the SAA about the value of digital skills when it comes to the archival field. Also, [my quest to find out](#) how many states have indexing with FamilySearch in their prisons continues, and my friend published [a new fictional work](#) which, again, features archives. My favorite line is when one of the protagonists says, when his assistant introduces the archivist (who is non-binary by the way): "I know who they are. I don't need an introduction. I know who the archivist is in this city, goddamnit...go away, shoo." The archivist has a significant role in the first half of the story, part of my friend's continued efforts to improve representation of archives in popular culture, something I salute them for.

There are several articles this week when it comes to archives. My fellow colleagues at the NSA wrote about [Gorbachev's diplomatic efforts](#) to try and stop the Persian Gulf War in 1991, [the anniversary](#) of George Kennan's Long Telegram, and [climate change negotiations](#) by the Clinton Administration. At the same time, the NSA joined other groups to [urge the Biden Administration](#) to take "specific, meaningful steps to strengthen the Freedom of Information Act and reduce government secrecy." Other than this, Margot Note, who I've mentioned in this newsletter before, [wrote about](#) visual literacy, historic preservation and image management while Maarja Krusten talked about preservation of presidential records [in our current time](#), and [digital records](#). The Board of the Society of Mississippi Archivists released a statement [opposing](#) the members of Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH)'s Board of Trustees being nominated by the board and confirmed by the Mississippi State Senate. They said this is important to oppose because Mississippi has a difficult and complex history, still struggling with "issues of civil rights and racial justice," it needs to not be "unencumbered by political interests." There are articles about [wonderful Black History collections](#), a community archives project [of the Norfolk Record Office](#), some people reflecting on COVID-19 [web collecting](#) by the NIH, a [presentation](#) at Archive/Counter Archive 2020 Symposium, and the [intersection](#) of natural history and archives. Of note are posts about documenting the [1960s in digital collections](#) and [Emily Stohl of Book Riot](#) writing about archives, archivists, and dealing with a reactionary presidency.

That brings me to libraries. The Library of Congress has posts [about Afro-Latinos](#), [Fannie Lou Hamer](#), [Finnish War Trials](#), and [Matthew Whitaker](#) (a blind jazz pianist). NYPL [highlighted](#) Black women in history, *Hack Library School* [had a post](#) asking how to serve today's young adults in libraries, and *I Love Libraries* noted a number of LGBTQIA books [recommended](#) by librarians. Furthermore, [Newsweek argued](#), as a number of people in the library field have said as well, that libraries are an essential service so librarians should get the vaccine, something which I definitely agree with. There was a story, which some may describe as scary, about a Michigan library [being closed down](#) because of venomous spiders, CBC noting that libraries in British Columbia [are removing](#) late fees, a [librarian in the UK](#) saying they had to use "guerrilla tactics" to preserve their underfunded library, and *Ed Tech* magazine [talking about](#) how school librarians, like many of us, have adjusted to remote learning.

<https://youtu.be/0hKHckkz6K4>

*The above video was originally [shared by Black Pro Gen](#), a Black genealogy group on Twitter.*

With that, let me move to one of my favorite topics, genealogy. Nicka Smith, a Black genealogist, [talked about major news on Ancestry](#), with the digitization of U.S. Freedmen's Bureau Records for all U.S. States, the Danish West Indies Record Collection, the Reindexed U.S. Probate Collection, and launching a "Questions and Ancestors: Black Family History" video content series, where Smith will be interviewed. Another Black genealogist, Shannon Christmas [wrote about](#) how so-called "slave schedules" largely "identify enslavers, not the enslaved" as Black people are only identified, literally, by tick marks! It's hard to say what tick mark identifies what person, as no names are listed. He specifically criticized the popular genealogy show *Finding Your Roots* for misusing the schedules to reinforce the "already pervasive falsehood

that tracing African American families remains a Sisyphean task of Herculean magnitude,” noting that a number of “easy-to-access, but too often overlooked digital resources and archival records contain far more detail about African American lives – free and enslaved alike” than these schedules. Later posts on his blog focused on finding ancestors by [using X-DNA](#), [Genetic Genealogy](#), [tracing free people of color](#) before 1870, and [researching](#) enslaved ancestors. Other blogs focused on [events at RootsTech](#) and making [genea-goals](#).

That brings me to the final part of this newsletter. The *School Library Journal* had a post about *Cat in the Hat* removed from reading programs [because of racism by Dr. Seuss](#) (and replaced with more diverse books). Other articles were about a NLRB ruling which potentially limits which adjuncts [can form unions](#), California Democrats [wanting to](#) strike the term illegal ‘alien’ from state law, which makes sense, requests by Reuters journalists [about mortality](#) in U.S. jails, the [burning of the U.S. capital](#) by the British in the so-called “War of 1812,” and [the elusive life](#) of Martha Washington. I really enjoyed illustrations on *The Nib* about Biden’s [milquetoast student debt plan](#), how the GOP [used the “free market”](#) to screw over Texans (from the always great Tom Tomorrow), the spread of [even more COVID-19 mutations](#), and [a debate](#) between two luminaries in the Black freedom struggle in the U.S.: Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and the less-known Robert F. Williams.

That’s all I have for this week. Hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Reviews, archives, libraries, genealogy, and the value of history

This week's newsletter I'll be talking about some new pop culture reviews I published, but also archives, library, and genealogy news, along with related stories

*[Newsletter originally published [on Mar. 7, 2021](#)]*



*Mira prepares to go on the case to find a missing library book in Mira, Royal Detective*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good week. There's been some great news in the past week. For one, I had [an article published in \*I Love Libraries\*](#) reviewing libraries in *Mira, Royal Detective*, an image of which is shown at the beginning of this newsletter. Secondly, I had my first article published in *The Geekiary* titled "[Disenchantment is Queer Through and Through](#)," which David Opie called it a "[great article](#)." Third, I [put together a post](#) about messy libraries and fighting in the library in animated series. With that, let me continue onward to the rest of my newsletter.

When it comes to archives, there is a lot to report for this week. On Twitter, Maariajia Krusten [told me](#) about how she once participated in listservs, David Ferriero of NARA [noted](#) that since the start of the pandemic, "a large portion of NARA has been teleworking 100%" with staff from the Office of Research Services responding to reference requests, preparing digitized files and metadata, creating folder and box lists, submitting metadata and digitized files to upload to the

NARA Catalog, writing blogposts, conducting quality control on digital images, and “conducting processing and description work that can be done remotely.” He said that all these tasks allowed the agency to “connect with customers and make access happen.” He further highlighted History Hub, new collaborative projects involving the NARA Catalog, tagging and transcription in the catalog, and many other efforts. Beyond NARA, there is a post where Rebekah Davis talks about her daily time [as an archivist at Limestone County Archives](#), one of my colleagues at the National Security Archives, Lauren Harper, writes about [new documents focused on](#) the Capitol Riot, and Brecht Declercq [pleas](#) for media historians and media archivists to become better acquainted with each other. I was fascinated to read Karl Melrose’s article about [benchmarking of records across organisations](#), Kristen Merryman [noting](#) how fifteen films from the forestry service are available on Digital North Carolina, a summary of a new book [by Verne Harris](#) about the ghosts of the archive, and a person [on the /r/Archivists subreddit](#) asking how to store newspapers. I was excited to learn about [the digital archive](#) of the Kress Collection, a collection which could be useful to some of you.

That brings me to libraries. *Hack Library School* had posts about [the ALA's Library History Round Table](#) and “[special libraries](#),” while *I Love Libraries* talked about [online games](#) and how libraries have [adapted due to the pandemic](#). *American Libraries* magazine wrote about how library patrons with disabilities face [increased challenges](#) as a result of the pandemic, NYPL put together [a booklist](#) related to the film “Judas and the Black Messiah” and [another post more broadly](#) about Black History Month. While horrified by [the story](#) of a terrible patron on an /r/Libraries thread, it was even more valuable to read two threads which talked about libraries adapting to the pandemic, in terms of [what “open” looks like](#), and taking books [out of quarantine](#). The same could be said about an article assessing [different definitions](#) of disability, [history of libraries in classical antiquity](#), a [series of events](#) hosted by the Wiener Holocaust Library highlighting their new digital resource, [Testifying to the Truth](#), which “features more than 1,000 eyewitness accounts of refugees and survivors of the Holocaust, newly digitised and translated into English for the first time,” and a post by business reference librarian Lynn Weinstein [about Black insurance companies](#). I’d like to note Cynthia Hudson-Vitale and Judy Ruttenberg [writing about](#) persistent identifiers which can connect a scholarly record with many versions, Veronica Arellano Douglas [trying to pull back](#) the “curtain” on so-called library magic (clue: it’s not magic), and [a project](#) called Who Can Get Your Book? run by the Fight for the Future about accessibility (and lack thereof) of books to people across the U.S. I urge you all to [sign this letter](#) to legislators, asking them to support the Build America’s Libraries Act which would “provide \$5 billion in funding to repair, modernize, and construct library facilities in underserved and marginalized communities.”

With that, it’s time to talk about genealogy. First of all, Carolynn ni Lochlainn has [an interesting genealogy channel](#) which people should subscribe to. Other than that, Brooke Schreier Ganz gave a talk about how [you can use FOIA](#) for your genealogy, there is the story of a college student named Eric Schubert [using genetic genealogy](#) to crack cold cases, and a focus on a Franklin County, North Carolina Black woman, Renate Yarborough-Sanders, who has spent [over 20 years](#) to research her family, asking others to do the same. Of note for genealogists is Ancestry.com [beating](#) a California privacy suit over yearbook photos, with [a federal judge saying](#) that the plaintiffs, who said the company “uses and profits from photographs and other personal

details in its U.S. school yearbooks database without permission,” don’t have standing, and that the “company is immune from liability under the Communications Decency Act.” While on the one hand, this could be seen as a positive for genealogists, as it allows records to be open without restriction, it is a negative in terms of privacy. In the past week, I also read about [Irish genealogy](#), [RootsTech Connect 2021](#), and [Black genealogy](#). Even worse than Ancestry’s victory was the AI tool created by MyHeritage, a genealogy testing company, which [creepily](#) lets you [re-animate dead relatives](#). I’m sorry, but this is going too far. I don’t why anyone would ever think this is a good idea. This type of software is dishonoring dead people, moves away from actual research, and understanding of the past. It is no coincidence that a US investment firm, Francisco Partners, [just acquired MyHeritage](#), based in Tel Aviv, which has “acquired 11 other companies since it was founded.” This is purely the machinery of capitalism at work, with a company profiting off people’s family stories.

<https://youtu.be/8VNP8GMkWII>

That brings me to the final part of this newsletter. Connected to the above video, [The New Republic asks](#) if historians can be traumatized by history (the answer is obviously yes), the American Historical Association [wrote a letter of support](#) for the institution of political history in Hungary, while the AHA’s *Perspectives on History* [talked about grad school](#). The National Museum of African American History & Culture noted [the continued importance](#) of Black History Month, [a podcast](#) of the Preservation Maryland interviewed the head of the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture (Chanel Compton), and Early American Historian William Hogeland [wrote about](#) Naomi Wolf, Tucker Carlson, and the threat of American fascism, as he terms it. I liked reading about [Frederick Douglass](#), the [problem of information overload](#), how Libraries Archives and Museums are [more alike](#) than different especially when it comes to precarious labor, and am glad to see Dr. Seuss Enterprises [shelving six books](#), citing hurtful portrayals of Asian and Black people. It is not surprising to see that in 2020, national parks across the U.S. [had, collectively, 237 million visitors](#). That’s a lot of people! On another note, I’m excited to read [Rebecca DeWolf](#)’s upcoming book (in October) titled *Gendered Citizenship: The Original Conflict over the Equal Rights Amendment, 1920-1963*, and [Margot Canaday](#)’s new book, under contract, titled *Queer Career: Sexuality and Employment in Modern America*, whenever it comes out, as it could be useful for LGBTQ genealogy and research. Canaday is a legal and political historian wrote a very thoughtful book titled *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth Century America*, which [has been called](#) “the most expansive study of the federal regulation of homosexuality yet written,” examining that regulation when it comes to immigration, military, and social welfare.

That’s it for this week’s newsletter. Hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Wonderful webcomics, family history, archives, libraries, and beyond

This week I'd also like to share various pop culture reviews I wrote in the past week, whether about genealogy, libraries, and archives, and so much more.

*[Newsletter originally published [on Mar. 14, 2021](#)]*



*One of my favorite libraries in animation, this one being a magical library in the Australian animated series *Prisoner Zero**

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a productive week. This past week, I published an article on my blog reviewing genealogy in popular culture, [focusing on one of my favorite webcomics, \*Tamberlane\*](#). I was surprised and honored to have the author of the webcomic, Caytlin Vilbrandt [called my post an “interesting write-up”](#) about how adoption makes “genealogical research more difficult,” using roots in the webcomic as an “entry point.” She said that roots and how “those can get complicated” is an angle she tries to “explore respectfully in the comic.” Apart from that, I wrote posts about [library restrictions in animation](#) and archives [in one of my favorite animated series](#). With that, I'd like to move on with my newsletter.

When it comes to archives, my colleagues at NSA, Lauren Harper and Wendy Valdes, wrote about mail delays [exacerbating problems](#) with long-ignored FOIA requests. Apart from that, Heather Briston, University Archivist and Head of Curators and Collections at UCLA, [talks about](#) challenges with digitizing student work, personally identifiable information, and privacy. David Ferriero of NARA [had a post](#) celebrating transparency in government. On a broader note, *The*

*American Archivist* just transitioned [to digital-only content](#), and the [new issue](#) of the SAA publication was released recently. There are articles about born-digital materials, Haiti, electronic records, archival reparations, and various reviews. Most are behind a paywall which requires SAA membership, understandably, but others are not. There are other articles of note, whether [about data loss](#), the [challenges](#) when it comes to digitizing records, the [scholarly record](#), [collections management systems](#), and [architectural photography](#). For her part, Sam Cross had a post on [her Pop Archives website](#) which reviewed *Cloud Atlas*, complete with yellowface, and the role of archives in this film. She is not the first archivist to review the film. I mentioned it [briefly on my blog](#) and UW Madison Student Chapter [reviewed the series](#), saying that while at first the archivist appears to enforce several stereotypes, archives, and by extension, archivists, have through history “reinforced the status quo, protecting the secrets of the powerful and preserving the history of the privileged.” The chapter adds that the archivist grows and “becomes more than a tool of the regime,” preserving and passing on an interview with a prisoner charged with sedition which is a “source of inspiration for generations to come.”

That brings me to the world of libraries. *I Love Libraries* had posts about how libraries [have adapted](#) during the pandemic and [young adult books](#), while writers on *Hack Library School* posted about [mental health](#), [legal information](#), and a [library science career](#). There were some other wonderful articles about the history of libraries in the [Middle Ages and Renaissance](#), [collections](#) at college libraries, the [National Emergency Library of the Internet Archive](#), and libraries [getting creative](#) when it comes to children’s books. The Library of Congress (LOC) had wonderful articles about [obscure TV and film](#), a [private art collection](#), [young people’s literature](#), [Spanish legal documents](#) held by the Law Library of Congress, and [science collections](#). Other librarians at LOC wrote about [women and sports](#), an [old Florida courthouse](#), [she shanties](#) from women composers, the [gender gap in politics](#), and the [Panic of 1907](#).



*The Gibson Hotel, in Cincinnati, lobby in 1910, approaching from Walnut Street; my ancestor Stanley S. Mills worked there as a hotel manager*

With that, we get to genealogy. There is a flurry of articles this week. Some talk about [heritage travel](#) and [genetic testing](#), while others focus on [DNA analysis](#), [Roots Tech](#), [Danish National Archives](#), increase in [engagement on Ancestry.com](#), [tax lists from the 1700s to 1850s](#), and [female ancestors](#). *Yahoo! Sports* summarized the case of those who sued Ancestry, with two California residents [insisting that](#) “Ancestry violated their right of publicity by using, without their consent and without paying them, decades-old yearbook names, photographs, likenesses and student activities (including sports and clubs),” with the judge, Beeler, acknowledging that Ancestry, which has “more than 730 million records from more than 450,000 school yearbooks” doesn’t try and obtain consent from those “depicted in the yearbooks.” However, Beeler said that information in the database is not private but is public and said that the activities of the site fall under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act which “immunizes website operators from liability for third-party content.” Even so, the judge said that this content is not “protected free speech,” arguing that decades-old yearbooks are not “demonstrably an issue of public interest.” On the other hand, *The Hidden Branch* had tips about genealogy, whether about [illiterate ancestors](#) and an [X on the census form](#).

In closing this newsletter I'd like to share a number of other articles. I read some articles in *Perspectives of History* the past week about [Mexican migration](#), [online teaching](#), [physical education](#), [community history](#) of the Black experience, and [writing](#) histories of witchcraft. Furthermore, I liked reading about [unlocking](#) centuries of secrets in unlocked letters, the [great polio vaccine heist](#), [Muhammad Ali](#), [desegregation](#), fighting [against voter suppression](#), [peer reviewers](#), [Mississippi biomass facility](#), [air pollution](#), and [aversion of nuclear war](#).

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead.

- Burkely

# Family history, webcomics, archives, and new library resources

I'll be talking about libraries, archives, and genealogy, as I do every week, along with a bunch of new resources available from the Library of Congress!

*[Newsletter originally published [on Mar. 21, 2021](#)]*



*Tag and Prisoner Zero in episode 8 of *Prisoner Zero* inside a space library.*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a productive week. On the one hand, I published a post [about family secrets](#), trees, and history in one of my favorite ongoing webcomics, *Spellbound*. On the other hand, I wrote about archives themes in [two other webcomics](#): *180 Angel* (ongoing) and *Power Ballad* (ended some years ago), and [anti-social male librarians](#) in various animated series. I'd [recently reorganized a page](#) on my Libraries in *Popular Culture* blog site, which is being revised all the time. I'm planning to have a similar format on other blog pages, expanding it to my blogs focusing on archives and genealogy as well. I am super excited by my upcoming guest post on Jennifer Snoek-Brown's *Reel Librarians* website titled "Non-White librarians in animated series: She-Ra to Yamibou." Currently, my friend is writing a new fiction work, which will have a scene in a library and may mention archives (or an archivist), so I'll likely share that with you next week to give that friend some support in this newsletter. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

Let me start with archives. My colleagues at NSA wrote about [U.S. nuclear armed exercises](#) and the [Allende massacre in Mexico](#). There was some chatter by my colleagues about how someone who was part of the former administration who [has ties to the former military junta of Argentina](#)...and even led the FOIA desk at the State Department! On a related records note, I'd like to point to a new bill [proposed by Carolyn Maloney](#), called the [Presidential Records Preservation Act](#), which would "require the president, vice president and White House senior officials to "make and preserve" records that track the president's official activities," including putting in place specific measures to preserve and capture electronic records while making them "easily searchable and accessible." If this passed, it would definitely change how records are viewed and accessed by the general public. I enjoyed [listening to a podcast](#) about how archivists can "combat systemic racism in the workplace" and the archives profession, reading [Margot Note's explanation](#) of how a CMS improves and automates archival labor, Rachael Woody's article on how to prepare your family treasures [for the worst](#), and another about the effects of the current pandemic [on "web-archiving efforts](#) at the University of Illinois." The [search](#) for the new director of the SAA is beginning, the spring conference of MARAC (Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference), about "Suffrage Legacies: Civil Rights, Political Activism, and Archives" [will be hosted](#) in April, the University of Arizona [is digitizing](#) over 6,000 recordings of Indigenous oral history, and researchers are interviewing Black engineers and business people in order to [capture the history of the tech industry](#)." Black Women Radicals, a Black feminist advocacy organization, highlighted 16 [Black feminist archival projects](#) and the NARA blog *Pieces of History* [talked about](#) USS Monitor gun carriages. Others wrote about [linked data](#), [regional archives](#), [information technology](#), and a [historic Kentucky kitchen](#). Also of note, of course, is the [newest issue](#) of *Archival Outlook* for March and April 2021, which I recommend you read.

That brings me to libraries. There were a number of great blogs from the Library of Congress (LOC) about new additions [to Chronicling America](#), the [trial of Governor Picton in Trinidad](#), the [U.S. farm bill](#), [GIS data](#), new [entries on the recording registry](#), [historic female trailblazers](#), [Spanish laws](#), a new [LGBTQ resource](#) from the LOC music division, [new oversight board](#) of Facebook, [Latina women](#), [maps](#), and [manuscripts](#). *Hack Library School* talked about the [value of books](#), LOC recently updated [their handbook](#) of Latin American studies, the *Washington Post* [talked about](#) the e-book monopoly Amazon has, *The Verge* [added](#) that Amazon is restricting how these e-books are made available to public libraries, and *Columbus Underground* [talked about](#) the importance of OCLC to the library community.

With that, I'd like to briefly touch on genealogy. Apart from some mention in mainstream publications [like Comic Book Resources](#) and an [opinion piece in Newsweek](#) which mentioned Ancestry.com DNA results showing direct lines to the Dominican Republic, others wrote about various genealogy topics. This included [RootsTech Connect](#), [women's history](#), [genealogy ethics](#), [Black genealogy](#), [Irish genealogy](#), and [coats of arms](#). Furthermore, some [even suggested](#) that Pinterest would be a good tool for genealogists (I guess?) and [gave tips](#) for navigating the Irish diaspora.

<https://youtu.be/gx5zY495c8w>

There are a number of other stories which I'd like to mention. Amazon [announced](#) that it will not sell books that "frame sexual identity as mental illness" which should be a no-brainer, California universities and Elsevier [made a huge open access deal](#), MIT Press [launched](#) direct open-access monographs, and POGO talked about how agencies [misuse](#) the law enforcement exemption in FOIA. *The Verge* [wrote about](#) how scientists scrambled to stop the EPA, during the time of the traitorous president, from wiping out climate data, Doris Morgan Rueda, a doctoral candidate at the University of Nevada in Las Vegas, [emphasized the importance](#) of accurate historical interpretation, while the American Historical Association [opposed an effort](#) to eliminate tenure at an Ohio university (John Carroll University). One writer in the AHA's *Perspectives of History*, Varsha Venkatasubramanian, explained the importance of building [an online presence as a historian](#). As always, I enjoyed the illustrations in *The Nib*, like the ones about collective [stress \(and the pandemic\)](#), the "[new boss](#)" (how Biden is still detaining immigrants), and [a guide](#) to dealing with police at protests. Last but not least, *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about the [Salem Witch Trial](#), how women [once dominated](#) the beer industry, the [first Black physician in America](#) (James McCune Smith), and the woman who [helped avert nuclear war](#): Juanita Moody.

That's all for this week's newsletter. I hope you all have a great week ahead, despite the continued rise in bigotry in the country, only amplified in recent days with the attacks on Asian Americans in Georgia. Please be safe out there and work to counter this racist filth in the U.S. the best you can. Thanks.

- Burkely

# Librarians, secret files, pop culture reviews, archival appraisal, genealogy, and more

This week I'll be talking about libraries, archives, and genealogy, but will also mention a new pop culture review I published on Reel Librarians, and other related news.

*[Newsletter originally published on [Mar. 28, 2021](#)]*



*Prisoner Zero holds the time crystal in his hands with book piles behind him. This is NOT a way to organize books, people, please!*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. On March 24th, my guest post on Jennifer Snoek-Brown's *Reel Librarians* [got published](#)! It focuses on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) librarians in animation and anime. Some of my favorites are George and Lance in the new *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power* series, Doctor Oldham in *Gargantia* (also a medical doctor), Myne in *Ascendance of a Bookworm*, and Lilith in *Yamibou*. Yesterday, I posted a [review of secret files, mystery](#), and archival themes in one episode of the acclaimed Netflix drama, *The Crown*. Apart from that, in [my friend's new fictional work](#), there is a brief mention of a library as a place of refuge. My friend promises that in the next story, archives will be mentioned more directly. Oh, and Rebecca Long, editor, and writer, mentioned [my first article about Kaisa](#), the librarian in *Hilda*, in her [review of the series for Mic](#). While she incorrectly said that the American Library Association gave the praise for Kaisa, she still said

that I pointed to the “positive, mold-breaking portrayal of Trolberg’s librarian…a young, queer-coded steward of knowledge who also happens to be a witch.” I sent [a flurry of tweets to her](#) about it and I hope to hear from her in the future. With that, let me begin my newsletter!

When it comes to archives, there are a number of promising developments. The *American Archivist Reviews Portal* had articles about [oral history projects](#) and a [documentary project](#) on Jewish refugees, while the M. E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives at Albany University [has a website](#) trying to create an “open source tool for preserving email archives using multiple formats, such as MBOX, PDF, and WARC” which does not currently exist. Northwest Archivists [described two webinars](#) about digitizing paper records, and the American Historical Association (AHA) announced the [victory of their challenge](#) to “NARA’s approval of ICE’s records disposition,” which would have permitted ICE to destroy records that documented “mistreatment of immigrants” detained in the agency’s custody. On page 11 of the decision, the U.S. District Court judge, [Amit P. Mehta](#), said that “retaining inclusive perspectives was a **lesser priority** for the agency [NARA] in selecting which documents to preserve,” which is troubling. On page 14, the judge added that “NARA’s approval of the schedule was arbitrary and capricious on the grounds that NARA **failed to evaluate the research value of the ICE records** and that NARA failed to address significant and relevant public comments.” Yikes. The judge also says, on page 16, that NARA did NOT consider “current research use or made inferences about the anticipated use of the documents in future research.” The next page said that when the agency receives “numerous comments discussing the research value of records in dispute, it has a **duty to respond** to such comments and to explain its reasoning.” On page 20, the judge added that NARA should also weigh “the research value of any information that is preserved in primary sources” but isn’t captured by “secondary summaries or other documents that are permanently preserved.” That is a failure of [records appraisal](#) that Margot Note wrote about, the [importance in records](#) explained by Karl Melrose. Related to this is acquisition, which Note also [explained recently](#). I may write about this, considering [the large number](#) of results in *The American Archivist*. This case reminds me of a 1986 article, in *The American Archivist* I read in grad school, “[Appraisal and the FBI Files Case: For Whom Do Archivists Retain Records?](#)” by Susan Steinwall, about a case where NARA followed the FBI’s recommendations and would have destroyed records, if not stopped by the court case.

That brings me to libraries. *Hack Library School* had articles about the [value of public speaking](#), [invisible labor](#), a [COVID experience of one library](#), [burnout](#), and [planning](#) post-COVID when working in a junior high school library. I’d like to mention posts on the Library of Congress blog about [conductor Leopold Stokowski](#) and [case law](#), along with [library advocacy resolutions](#) and showcasing [beautiful libraries](#) in *American Libraries* magazine. Also of note are articles in the *School Library Journal* [about Dr. Seuss](#) and how not having his works in libraries is NOT censorship and [lessons learned](#) from adapting to the pandemic, and [a review by Jennifer Snoek-Brown](#) of a library scene in the acclaimed *Hidden Figures* film in 2017. I further enjoyed reading about the [cost of library stewardship](#), [post-pandemic libraries](#), [Black library leaders](#), [controlled digital lending](#), and [Black female writers](#). Just as important is the news that Harvard University is ending the use of the [subject headings “alien” or “illegal alien,”](#) now using terms like “noncitizen” or “undocumented immigrant” instead! I am glad to see that Snoek-Brown got on [a](#)

[podcast](#) about [library scenes](#) in horror films. Congrats to her. Someday, I'd like to be on a podcast too, or maybe I will create my own podcast.

Anyway, let me move onto genealogy. There were discussions about [divorce records](#), how to do [genealogy via Zoom](#), [finding your family tree](#), and [wedding certificates](#). Others wrote about how [now is the time](#) to do genealogy research, [looking for Dutch grandparents](#), and [Ancestry's new CEO, Deb Liu](#), with Chinese roots, saying that "continuing to deepen people's relationship with the past, being able to discover their ancestors, being able to connect with relatives — I think that continues to be really core to the mission of what we do." I found articles about [gaps in infant mortality records](#), working around [the census of 1890](#), [biracial history](#), genealogists and historians [regaining "access](#) to the reference library, microfilm library, computer terminals and original records" of the Georgia Archives, and limits proposed on when police can "search consumer genealogical databases in connection with a crime" [going through the Maryland General Assembly](#). The latter is promising because police should not have unfettered access to such databases. Their access should be limited in whatever way possible since that the genetic data is personal information.

<https://youtu.be/ZrJILA-1Wrc>

This brings me to the last part of this newsletter. There were various comics I enjoyed looking through this past week, whether about [background checks](#), the [so-called "crisis](#) at the US-Mexico border, [marijuana policy](#) in the Biden White House, racists [continuing to propagate](#) their hate, and "relics" in the [time before COVID](#). The AHA, for their part, had statements condemning [the rising violence](#) against Asian Americans and Asians, [reviewed the articles](#) in the March Issue of the *American Historical Review*, and [Rebecca L. Davis](#) told a [story of homophobia](#) in the job search process for historians. I was excited to see the colonial site [discovered right near](#) my alma mater in St. Mary's City. In other news, the *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about [Asian-American history](#), a [nature preserve in Ecuador](#), a historic 16th century church in Mexico [burning down](#), and the first vial used in COVID-19 vaccinations [joining](#) Smithsonian collections. William Hogeland had an interesting newsletter, this time [about the filibuster](#), Angela Buckley wrote [about pirates](#), *The Artifice* examined literature [about Antietam](#), and Ashwanta Jackson wrote about [the life of Matilda Sissieretta Jones](#), a Black female classical music performer. History Associates outlined what they call the "[art of crafting a FOIA request](#)" and historian Rebecca DeWolf argued that [2021 could finally be the moment](#) for the Equal Rights Amendment. I loved to hearing that Lando Calrissian and other LGBTQ+ characters [will be "featured](#) on Pride month variant covers for Marvel's Star Wars comics in June," and liked to hear a perspective [in the Daily Princeton](#) that unlike live-action, animation is "beyond capable of creating captivating worlds and evoking emotional feelings that leave watchers wanting more." They added that "live-actions — especially adaptations — suck. Watch animation instead." While I watch live-action media, of course, I agree with their sentiment.

That's all for this week. Hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Archives, pop culture, libraries, trans people, family history, and all the rest

This week I'll focus on spinster librarians and archival manipulation in fiction, archives and library news, trans people, family history, and more!

*[Newsletter originally published on [Apr. 4, 2021](#)]*



*The old librarian in Prisoner Zero, a stereotypical librarian in animation*

There's a lot of news to report for this week! For one, I found out that [my newest article](#) about temporary stop on the Seattle Federal Records Center's closure, was published on *Issues & Advocacy*. So, that made me happy to see and I will likely write some more articles for them in the future. On my blogs, I reviewed [spinster librarians in animated series](#) and wrote a post titled "[Evil Anna and How I Learned to Love Archival Manipulation](#)," which is obviously tongue-in-cheek (you will see what I mean if you read it). Already I've received some positive responses on Reddit to these posts, especially on the sub for libraries, although on Twitter responses have been non-existent. Oh, I finally finished an updated list of [librarians/libraries in anime](#), and put together similar lists, but broader, for my blogs reviewing [genealogy](#) and [archives](#) in popular culture. If you have recommendations of something you'd like me to write about, let me know. Anyway, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

Starting with archives, [one of my colleagues at NSA](#) wrote about how Brazil aided (and abetted) the overthrow of Salvador Allende of Chile in 1973. Samantha "Sam" Cross of *Pop Archives* reviewed archives in various different mediums: radio ([The Magnus Archives](#)), animation ([Codename: Kids Next Door](#)), and video games ([Diablo 3](#)). *ArchivesAware!* interviewed Jeanie

Fisher, Reference Archivist of the Seattle Municipal Archives [about what she loves](#) about archives, History Scotland [reported](#) that over a million records held by the National Records of Scotland were put online, [a celebration](#) of Smithsonian Transcription Center, and [glass plate negatives](#) of Mitchell Community College. *Pieces of History*, a NARA blog, had posts about Assistant U.S. Secretary General Mabel Walker Willebrandt [who enforced the Volstead Act](#) and pursued famous bootleggers, [the Fenian Brotherhood](#), [exploring famine files and arrival records](#) of Irish immigrants, and [Walt Whitman's facial hair](#). In other archival news, Lucy Britner talked about the day in the life of [a... whisky archivist](#), the BYU-Hawaii noted that it is holding historical documents and [1,500 Polynesian artifacts](#), Margot Note wrote about the [value of archival description](#), and some archivists continued their focus on the 1960s, talking about bridging generations and [scholarship in online archives](#) when it comes to that time period. Note [talked about](#) the approaches to acquisition, while there was news about the Louvre [putting its entire collection](#) online, [meeting the leaders](#) of the SNAP section, [the difference](#) between digital asset management systems and collections management systems, the [American Indian Digital History Project](#) and the [ARK Alliance](#). I'd like to mention some interesting articles I came across this week, one which critiques whiteness as [an archival imperative](#) and another which explores [into archival descriptions](#) of LGBTQ materials. Neither were published in the past week but are relevant enough to include here in this section of the newsletter.

Then we get to libraries. I enjoyed reading [an issue of Serious Trans Vibes](#), with the protagonist, a trans woman, asking for a new library card and getting her name corrected from her [dead name](#). Presumably, her gender was corrected in the library system, as it was originally recorded wrong in that system. Commenters rightly noted it is none of the library's business to ask for her gender and some recalled their experiences in libraries. This is important to mention because the ALA, the primary library association in the United States of which I just became a member, [stated](#) that libraries must "actively affirm and support the safety and rights of transgender people." There is even a book by trans library workers, [Supporting Trans People in Libraries](#), which attempts to dismantle some of the barriers libraries have to "actively supporting trans people." Some scholars said that for trans people, [the library, in Portland](#), to give one example, is one of the last places they look for information because of outdated health information or an environment which is unwelcoming. Other information is scattered throughout the "Libraries and the LGBTQ community" page on Wikipedia. In other news, NYPL wrote about [screenwriter Anita Loos](#), [NAACP Image Awards literary booklist](#), and [adult-oriented manga](#). The Library of Congress had posts about the new law librarian of Congress, [Aslihan Bulut](#), celebrated the life of a late [deputy librarian](#) for library collections and services, while writing about [panoramic maps](#) portray U.S. and Canadian cities and towns, [Bob Hope collection](#), and a legal document signed [by Mary Coffin Starbuck](#) of Nantucket and Wunnatuckquannum. Just as important was a list of [adult non-fiction](#) to celebrate National Deaf History Month (last month), [endangered alphabets](#), a [traveling Black women's library](#), [COVID relief for libraries](#), libraries as [key tools](#) for people getting out of prison, and [a new resource](#) of the National Library of Scotland on Black revolutionaries in the Atlantic World.

Let me talk about genealogy. The blog, *Hidden Branch* had posts about [holy ancestors](#) and [an unfortunate ancestor](#), while Paul Chiddicks wrote about distinguishing between [fact and fiction in genealogy](#) and [how to research a WWI soldier](#). Others wrote about various related topics:

finding hidden treasures in the [Napa Valley genealogy library](#), family history remaining [a “bright spot”](#) for Mormons, and WWII Missing Air Crew Reports ([MACRs](#)). I liked reading about [newspaper archives](#), [Black genealogy](#), and [the success story](#) of Ancestry.com.

<https://youtu.be/Zrv3vkhBthU>

*This is [one strange archivist](#), I must say... it sorta makes more sense in the whole episode, I guess. Anyway, this whole episode of Regular Show is about obsolete formats fighting each other, with VHS as the dominant form (why?)*

In the final part of this newsletter, I'd like to talk about numerous related stories which don't neatly fit into the categories of archives, libraries, or genealogy. *The Nib* had illustrations about [an ICE processing center](#), steps to [fleeing America during a pandemic](#), and [pundits ignoring](#) an anti-trans bill passing in Arkansas, claiming they aren't as "important" as other issues. CBC had [an article](#) about a freed enslaved person buried in Hamilton Cemetery is a U.S. Civil War vet, *The Guardian* talked about [amateur detectives](#), *Smithsonian* magazine noted how [Black activists organized](#) for racial equality before the Civil War, Ben Vinson III wrote in the *Perspectives of History* about [the “perpetual newness”](#) of Black history, and [LA Times explained](#) what happens when ICE asks Google for your user information. Other publications asked whether online proctored exams [undermine](#) student privacy, how books [can address](#) economic inequality, how the filibuster has [been used](#) to deny Black rights for over 100 years, had [remote reflections](#) on remote learning from a scholar, and [asked whether](#) Microsoft technology can classify records better than a human (obviously, it cannot, as an any archivist or record manager would know).

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Victory in Seattle, archives, trans characters in literature, libraries, genealogy, and much more

This week I'll be writing about archives, libraries, and genealogy, as always, but also the proposed Seattle NARA facility closure being stopped and other important issues

*[Newsletter originally published [on Apr. 11, 2021](#)]*



*When you think your collections are disorganized, think of the book piles in Prisoner Zero. As I've said before, this is not the way to organize books*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a great week as we begin a new month. I was overjoyed to hear that the Biden Administration [stopped the impending sale](#) of the National Archives facility in Seattle, something which I've written about a couple times in the past year, including [my article about it in early March](#). In the end of that article, I wrote that "although the closure of the Seattle FRC has been halted by Judge Coughenour, this is only a temporary measure. In the short-term...express your opposition to the closure, while calling on President Biden to follow the judge's decision and keep the facility open. In the long term, NARA needs increased funding." The latter is still appli[c]able, even now. On a related note, I published a post [about "atypical" librarians](#) in animated series on my blog a couple days ago. I'm excited to announce that a post entitled "BIPOC archivists in animated series: Arizal and Grampa Park" will be published in Jennifer Snoek-Brown's *Reel Librarians* on April 14. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

I'd like to talk about archives first. One of my colleagues at the NSA, [William Burr, wrote about](#) the Berlin Crisis (1961-1962), B-52 bombers used during altercations with the North Koreans in 1968 and 1971, and over 99% of U.S. ICBMS on high alert in October 1973. Another colleague, Robert Wampler, [wrote about](#) the Clinton White House and climate change policy. In other news, in April 2022, [NARA will begin to release](#) the 1950 population census schedules, which will be a boon for genealogy, Nancy Beaumont [wrote about](#) being exhausted and exhilarated about the "new way" of doing business at the SAA (virtually), Sharon Mizota argued that [Wikidata as a form](#) of controlled descriptive vocabulary, while Andrea Donohue and Nicolette Lodic wrote [about managing](#) archival records. There is a [new online exhibition](#) on a trans publication in the late 1970s to mid-1980s by the Arquives in Canada, Andrew Warland [noted the challenge](#) of identifying born-digital records (like emails and social media posts), the Society of Mississippi Archivists [wrote about the failure](#) of SB 2727, a law I talked about in a newsletter [back on February 27](#) ("Libraries, digital skills, fiction, archives, Black genealogy, and more"), and Coquitlam, a city in British Columbia, [explained the art](#) of archival processing. It is worth reading the "News from the Section on Archives and Human Rights" from Trudy Huskamp Peterson [in the February newsletter](#) of the International Council of Archives, Rachael Cristine Woody's [post about](#) the essentials for a discoverable CMS, and staff of the Documentary Heritage and Preservation Services for New York (DHPSONY) [explained how](#) to find "untold stories" in the archive. The same can be said for the National Council of History's blog, where Jacqueline Hudson [talked about discovering activism and advocacy](#) in historic preservation, an interview with Clint Pumphrey and Chase Anderson on the [value of using Instagram](#) and other advocacy tools for archives to "reach audiences," and Ryan Anthony Donaldson & Rachael Cristine Woody's presentation about [why archives are always essential](#).

Then we get to libraries. As I always do, I stumbled upon a mention of libraries in [the 79th issue](#) of *Serious Trans Vibes*, by Sophia Labelle, a trans woman, and one of my favorite webcomics that I've come across recently. This webcomic is a curation, by Labelle, of her long-standing webcomic *Assigned Male*, and it is a slice-of-life through the perspective of an 11-year-old trans girl, Stephie, who is embracing her gender and exploring her identity as a child growing up in a cisgender world. Anyway, in the scene, Stephie says that while some call the comic absurd because it has "too many" trans characters, she asks whether readers have tried to randomly find "a book featuring trans characters in the library," or tried to find a trans character in the "billions of pages." She calls both of those propositions absurd, something which I agree with! There are many articles about libraries to share this week. First of all is a post by NYPL School Outreach Librarian Amber Certain [about diving deeper into New York City history](#) with students and another, from June of last year, by chief librarian Jill Rothstein, also at NYPL, is about trans, non-binary and GNC voices to [help you celebrate pride](#). *Hack Library School* had posts about [expanding](#) your horizons during your MLIS, [academic libraries](#), and [planning](#) your final library project in library school. The Library of Congress (LOC) had all sorts of interesting posts, as always. Some were about people like [Roger L. Stevens](#) (a theatrical producer, real-estate executive, and fundraiser), [music research guides](#), Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information [Color Photographs](#), the [interconnection](#) of Liberia and the United States (which some don't know about), Flickr members helping to [identify people](#) in LOC photographs, and [controversy](#) over marriage and anti-conversion laws in India. Other blogs included [an interview](#)

with the Maryland State Law Librarian, Steven Anderson, [remembering](#) Larry McMurtry, an award-winning author and screenwriter, [the LOC](#)'s Performing Arts Web Archive, [a poem](#) from Jason Reynolds, the LOC's National Ambassador for Young People's Literature, and [celebrating Law Day](#) on April 29. Just as important are [the calls](#) to allow libraries to narrow the digital divide, the [fight for Britain's libraries](#), [a letter](#) to Asian diasporic library workers, the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore [condemning](#) the "increasing attacks against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders" while promoting the statement by the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association which says something similar and [urges the library community](#) to "stand with us by publicly condemning anti-AAPI racism through visible actions." I enjoyed reading about the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) launching the [Book & Media Awards Shelf](#), said to be [a "one-stop shop](#) for finding world-class content for youth," and a library staffer's dogged research [sheds historic light](#) on a local soldier.

There is some news on the genealogy front. Some wrote about [discovering your roots](#), [valuation rolls](#) and [generations of genealogists](#), while others [talked about](#) AncestryDNA results for over 68 Black people with deep roots from South Carolina. Some wrote about [planning for genealogy trips](#), *The Hidden Branch* had an [interview with Claire Bradley](#), a young genealogist, while Midwest Computer Genealogists (MCG) noted how you can find citizenship records for US immigrant ancestors [before 1906](#) and differentiating [between fact and fiction](#) in family documents. MCG's February newsletter, available from [a link on their website](#) and on [the Internet Archive](#), with articles about the Harmony Mission, genealogy research offering hope at breaking brick walls, the challenge of tracing friends and neighbors, and other related news. Also is an [article on IrelandXO](#) about Irish workhouses and genealogist Nancy Loe [writing](#) about Triangle Shirtwaist factory workers.

<https://youtu.be/VSYZMb3opzs>

*The Nib* had various illustrations I'd loved reading this week whether about [COVID variants](#), [reactionary arguments](#) against vaccination, [New York's legalization](#) of recreational marijuana, [Amazon workers revealing](#) why they voted against unionization in Alabama, the [challenge](#) of visual processing information, [people ignoring](#) obvious details about harmful laws, [generational conflict](#), and [growing](#) urban rat populations. Then we get to history, one of my favorite subjects to write and read about. Some noted the challenges of working with [history that haunts us](#), [voting rights in the United States](#), and the [value of trans history](#), the latter related to [my comment on LinkedIn](#) in response to the comment. This also somewhat relates to an article in *Animation World Network* titled "[She-Ra and the Princesses of Power's Big, Beautiful Lesbian Love Finale](#)," interviewing showrunner Noelle Stevenson, and the fact that the show, which featured some minor trans characters, recently won a GLAAD Media Award for Outstanding Kids & Family Programming. I wrote about the show in [my recent article on librarians of color in animation](#), specifically highlighting George and Lance. *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about the [atomic clocks](#), graves of enslaved people [discovered](#) at a former Delaware plantation, a rainforest in the amazon [emitting more](#) greenhouse gasses than what it absorbs, [Greek mythology](#), female fire lookouts [saving wilderness areas](#) for over a century, and octopuses [having two stages of sleep](#), similar to mammals. *Time* talked about why the Asian-American story [is missing](#) from many U.S. classrooms, *Perspectives of History* blogged about [the value of](#)

the [#HistGym](#) community on Twitter, *Nature* had an article [about the fight against](#) fake-paper factories that churn out sham science, *Scalawag* [interviewing Victoria Rags](#)s of the Atlanta Jews of Color Council, and NPR reporting that Florida schools are [seeking to teach](#) 'digital literacy'.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Pop culture, fictional archivists, libraries, genealogy, and beyond

This week I'll be writing about the same topics, along with a guest post I wrote about fictional archivists, history, and much more

[Newsletter originally published [on Apr. 18, 2021](#)]



Welcome to the dark bowels of the library...with flying books! This is from the Australian animated series *Prisoner Zero*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a productive week. This week I've published a flurry of posts. For one, I had [my guest post about archivists](#) in animated series (Arizal and Grampa Park) published on Jennifer Snoek-Brown's blog, *Reel Librarians*, and secondly, and secondly, I published posts about the [genealogist stereotype](#) and [library stereotypes](#). In addition, my friend's wonderful new fictional story, "[Alva's Unbridled Rage and the Steam of Revolution](#)," had the archivist front and center. It has a non-binary Black woman named Mx. Lawlor (at least in the second half), who explains that "archivists expand user access, contribute to scholarship, collaborate, have diverse collections, support lifelong learning, share knowledge, support transparency and sustainability...[they] have a responsibility to mitigate harm and are never neutral. No archival institution or practice implemented is neutral...I am a revolutionary. I am an archivist. Both can exist within one person and not contradict each other." By a strange coincidence, I began [voting for the next SAA leaders](#) when I was reading this story, so that influenced me, as a lot of people took stands against White supremacy, anti-racism, and for diversity in a strong way. My friend said they were inspired to finish the story and publish it.

Let me talk a little about archives first. Of course, there were some stories, like a post by one of my NSA colleagues [about US-Soviet cooperation in outer space](#), but there was also a mention of a “vault” which keeps the recordings, and records, of the late musician, Prince, at his estate, which is basically an archives, as shown on [60 Minutes last week](#). I was pretty excited to see that! Also worth mentioning is France speeding up declassification of [secret documents from the Algeria War](#), an article arguing that digitizing archives can on one hand increase access, but on the other [can compromise privacy in some instances](#). It is an important balance to maintain, especially when digitizing records from the 20th century or even more recent. This connects to an [article in The American Archivist in 2020](#) about preservation and access for Born-digital electronic records. I further enjoyed reading about the [current state of privacy in Canadian archives, acquisition strategies](#), Getty Images announcing a partnership with [Black Archives](#), providing the platform “with [unique access](#) to its expansive Archive,” and questions [whether adoption records](#) should be publicly available or not.

That brings us to libraries. The Library of Congress (LOC) had posts about [librarianship](#), the [life and legacy of Glenn Miller](#), [art and portraits](#), [local libraries](#), how maps [perpetrated bias and bigotry](#), [national library week](#), and [jazz](#). [American Libraries](#) announced that Pelayo-Lozada, adult services assistant manager at Palos Verdes Library District in Rolling Hills Estates, California, [has been elected the 2021–2022 president-elect of the ALA](#), beating Ed Garcia, director of Cranston (R.I.) Public Library, and Stacey A. Aldrich, state librarian of the Hawaii State Public Library System in Honolulu. Pelayo-Lozada was previously endorsed by the [Asian/Pacific American Libraries Association](#), and [argued](#) that the “ALA belongs to all of us, regardless of our library worker status or type or where we reside and by embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (EDI), we can ensure our members feel ALA belongs to them, too.” What a great statement! She sounds just like a lot of the people running for SAA positions right now and it is a reason SAA leadership should reach out to her once those who have won the SAA leadership positions have won. Otherwise, there were stories about the [oldest library ever found](#), so-called [“soft skills,” ethical financial stewardship, interview tips, pop-up libraries](#), and LOC [seeking](#) diverse storytellers and archivists, to name some of the many stories I read this week.

Then we move to genealogy. Paul Chiddicks wrote about his [appearance on a podcast](#) run by Australian Genealogist Carole McCulloch, Jacob Eubanks had a talk about the [genealogical implications](#) of changing boundaries, the St. Louis County Library [shared](#) several resources in their history & genealogy virtual classroom about the ins and outs of genealogical research. Just as valuable is a book I came across, titled [Black Genealogy: How to Discover Your Family's Roots and Trace Your Ancestors Back Through an Eventful Past, Even to a Specific African Kingdom](#), which is by Charles L. Blockson. While it first came out in 1977, I believe there have been updated versions that have come out since and it could be a great genealogical resource, especially if you are researching Black ancestors and/or enslaved peoples. I was glad to see that NARA has upcoming events [about genealogy](#) (on May 19), whether about how to engage your family with your research finds, or [digitizing personal photo albums and scrapbooks](#) (on May 4). Other assorted stories were about [Irish gravestones](#), a [reparational genealogy project](#) by Carolynn ni Lochlainn, and [slavery](#) in Lower Canada and British Quebec. I suppose one of the big stories is Ancestry launching a Community Impact Program, which “[aims to mobilize](#)

[Ancestry resources](#) and products to build more connected and resilient communities through preserving at-risk history and empowering the next generation of history makers.”

In the final part of this story, I'd like to mention a number of stories. This includes articles about [American space policy](#), the issues with [auction houses selling](#) native culture items, building an [outline presence as a historian](#), [defunding the police](#), [community-driven](#) open access publishing, and [free speech](#). The Nib had illustrations about [Bezos](#), [vaccinations](#), and the [blame game](#).

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead.

- Burkely

# Stereotypes, magical libraries, archives, genealogy, and other subjects

This week, I'll share with you two reviews I wrote about libraries and librarians in popular culture, a new interview of me published this week, news about archives, genealogy, history, and more

*[Newsletter originally published [on April 26, 2021](#)]*



*Is this library in Prisoner Zero just books or are there other materials too?*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. In this past week, not only did I publish a [post about the stereotype of shushing librarians](#), but I had my newest post published in *I Love Libraries*, which focuses on a magical library, and [librarians, in the series \*Welcome to the Wayne\*](#). Just as exciting was [the new interview](#) of me published in *The Hidden Branch*, a blog for young genealogists. I'd say it deserves a read. Oh, also I just finished judging websites for the Maryland state level of National History Day, and I was the chief judge of a three-person group, so that was a lot of fun. With that all being said, let me begin this newsletter.

Starting with archives, there were some interesting articles I read this week. Grace Muñoz argued that reparative description initiatives [can be reframed](#) by using critical race theory and Black feminism. The same blog that Muñoz wrote on [shared resources](#) from the SAA's Native American Archives Section. Just as important is the History Coalition's [call to support](#) increased funding for NARA and the NHPRC, [the value](#) of advocating for archives, history, and the humanities, and [the power](#) of the insurgent archive in Latinx art. It was interesting to [read the working document](#), P&C (Privacy and Confidentiality) in Archives Best Practices, about a public

hearing in Conway, New Hampshire [for a bond](#) to restore county records, that UMD libraries and others were [awarded a grant](#) to archive social justice activism from college students who are people of color, and [behind the scenes of the archives](#) of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The same can be said about [NARA's citizen archivist mission](#) focusing on tagging and transcription of Chinese heritage records, with people able to tag or transcribe records with an easy-to-create account. NARA [released two datasets](#) from their catalog and the 1940 census, and Antonio Austin, the Archives, History and Heritage Advanced virtual intern in the Library of Congress (LOC)'s Prints & Photographs Division talked about [the importance](#) of making the less visible more discoverable. Then there is the story that the media ([like Politico](#)) is portraying as a "struggle" between Twitter and NARA. Twitter is not letting NARA repost the former president's tweets back on the platform for archival purposes, as they have done for the Obama Library, which I wrote about back in a newsletter in [late January](#) of this year, in newsletters in [September](#), [August](#), and [July](#) of last year, and in a newsletter [in July 2019](#). Politico notes that NARA is still trying to make the content from the Twitter account public, and make the content available as a download on the presidential library website of the former president, with watchdog groups saying NARA has to work to make the content public and even says that the former president could take "measures to restrict access to his archived tweets" if he wanted. This all makes me think of my proposed article to the *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies* about the all-digital Obama Library, which was rejected by the archival studies publication after one year of proposed edits and suggestions, all of which I replied to. Tired of them, I [publicly criticized them on Twitter](#) in October of last year, asking people to NOT submit any articles to the publication. At the time, [I lamented the whole experience](#) seemed like a waste of time and that I would be putting the "topic on the back burner...doing reviews of libraries and archives in popular culture instead," calling that "more fun and exciting than writing about a stuffy presidential library anyway." This wasn't the first rejection, as I [never got a reply](#) to a similar submission about NARA and genealogy to the *International Journal of Digital Curation* as I noted in June 2019. One day I may end up writing an academic article about the Obama library, the future of presidential libraries, and NARA, and another about the role of the genealogical community and NARA, but whatever I write, on either topic, will likely start from scratch.

Otherwise, there is a new database, titled "[Black Virginians in Blue](#)," run by The Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at UVA, which will be helpful to genealogists, and the [training list](#) of the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), along with [videos](#) on the NEDCC's YouTube channel.

<https://youtu.be/0tEniBGXkDY>

That brings me to libraries. I came across two great resources recently, first the [Library and Information Science Encyclopedia](#) and secondly the [Glossary of Library & Information Science](#). While these could both be useful for library science and library work, of course, I was thinking of possible use for them when it came to fiction, in that I could use them to find certain concepts as needed. Of course, there were articles about [why libraries are important](#), the [value of investing](#) in libraries, and a nice video from LOC about the cherry blossoms in D.C., titled "[Fleeting Beauty, Enduring Traditions](#)." There were also articles [about eLending](#) in the United States, the

ALA [announcing](#) a COVID library relief fund, proposals [for how libraries](#) will move forward, a rise in the number of parents [trying to ban](#) anti-racist books in U.S. schools (BOO!), the vitality of [digital inclusion](#), [library-on-demand](#), and [how libraries have dealt](#) with pandemics in the present, and past. There are also a number of great LOC posts about [geography and maps](#), [legislative history](#), [dancing](#), and [the intricacies](#) of jazz and gender, which I read this past week. Those who write for LOC are always so prolific!

Following this, is a short mention of genealogy-related topics. As I [noted on Twitter](#), I did some digging through a NARA database I had heard about some time ago. More than that, the Wilson Collection [released a new set](#) of family records from New Zealand, while genealogists wrote about the importance of [expanding](#) your scope of genealogical research, [analyzing](#) church marriage records, the [challenge of deciphering](#) the handwriting of your ancestors, and how pandemic closures [are affecting](#) genealogy research. Finally, I'd like to say how excited I am about the upcoming genealogy fair [hosted by NARA](#), specifically on their YouTube channel.

With that, there [are] some topics, in the realm of history, I'd like to mention. Some wrote about oral histories being [collected in Brooklyn](#), [Isaiah Thomas](#), how foreign assistance [led America](#) to win the Revolutionary War, and [medieval pandemic cures](#). Others wrote about [settler colonialism](#) from the 1860s to 1930s in the British empire, [the history](#) of "vaccine passports," women telephone operators [during WWI](#), and the history [of Cahokia](#). On related topics, there are those who are [trying to highlight](#) the contributions of Black female suffragists, a reviewer (Rebecca Long, who I mentioned in [my late March newsletter](#)) noting the [problem with](#) Captain American in *Winter Soldier* and why he isn't needed, people [making a database](#) of sign language more accessible, and a [new directory](#) (at least to me) of neurodivergent graphic designers and illustrators. That's something I'll probably have to add myself to as soon as I improve my illustration skills. That is, to say it lightly, a work in progress! It was interesting to read the Pew Research Center's report [on social media use in 2021](#), along with illustrations in *The Nib* about [tear gas](#), the [dissonance](#) in who is against the "establishment," [NYPD robot dog](#) in Manhattan, [drones](#), the [flat circle](#) of right-wing pundits, the [never-ending](#) Afghanistan war, and [building a media empire](#). There are so many illustrations in *The Nib* every week that I can't even include them all in this newsletter, which is why they are spread out across many newsletters.

I think that's all for this week's newsletter. Until next week! Hope you have a great week ahead on this fine Monday morning.

- Burkely

# The SAA election, fictional archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and beyond

This week I'll talk about archives, libraries, genealogy, and history, specifically mentioning a fiction my friend published yesterday, and some other news I found interesting in the past week

*[Newsletter originally published [on May 2, 2021](#)]*



*Tag and Jem in Prisoner Zero watching through a library in one of the episodes*

Hello everyone! I hope you had a productive week. Recently, I [wrote an article](#) analyzing the SAA election results after most of the people I voted for were elected, which is great! Hopefully, there is a sea change in the SAA going forward. Other than that, my friend wrote a wonderful new [fictional work](#) that includes a section about an archives preparing for an incoming invasion by flying steam-powered machines that menace in the airspace near the city. Here's an excerpt:

...It was one of the most important places in Avalor. Information on people across the queendom was stored there. This included family genealogies, papers on myths and legends, government records, and other assorted records...During the 41-year-rule of the wicked Shuriki...the archives were ransacked by this evil queen and her minions. Sitting at the information desk, the archivist yawned. He pulled a lever. It first activated a set of bells which rang across the building, informing the staff of the impending emergency...The safe room [in the archives] was stocked with necessary supplies, like food and water for one week...the staff rested easy...One question remained: Would these measures be enough to protect the archives?

Other than that, I published [a post examining the wizard in \*Prisoner Zero\*](#) who turns out to be a librarian, and his library in the bowels of a spaceship. The librarian ends up becoming so stressed out from managing the library by himself, making it one of the first times I've seen librarian burnout portrayed in animation. I noted the integral role of library values to the show itself. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter, starting with archives-related news.

Sarah Jones Weicksel [wrote about](#) the diverse coalition which worked to protect the NARA facility in Seattle from being closed, while my colleagues at the NSA wrote on [the evolution of diplomacy](#) in cyberspace and [whether JFK sent](#) a secret warning to Fidel Castro, through Brazil, on prisoners captured during the Bay of Pigs invasion. As valuable were articles on [those preserving](#) Olympic and Paralympic stories, improvements the [NPRC made](#) after the huge fire in 1973 which destroyed thousands of records, and the blaze in South Africa [which destroyed records](#) in a [Jagger Library](#)'s special collections, not all of which had been digitized. Other interesting pieces included the [third part of a series](#) on the history of dancing at the U.S. Naval Academy, a past NARA event on the killing of Vincent Chin in 1982 and [the trial that galvanized](#) the Asian American movement. I enjoyed seeing a project called Archiving the Black Web which is [trying to establish](#) "more equitable and accessible web archiving practice that can more effectively document the Black experience online," an article that [argues for a theory of archival power](#) that considers "the role of process and place in the shaping of modern memory practices," the [fundamentals of appraisal](#), and [the importance](#) of acknowledging history. There were articles on [how to pitch](#) web archiving to your institution, curators and archivists [talking about](#) "items they've collected from our pandemic year," [an introduction](#) of a member of the SNAP committee, and [an obituary](#) for a talented person who worked at the National Archives of Ireland: Gregory O'Connor. Of note, for those who are interested, is this video from the SAA's Records Management Section:

<https://youtu.be/nwLC66RTCcw>

That brings me to libraries. Jennifer Snoek-Brown [put together excerpts](#) from 10 poet librarians, while the Library of Congress (LOC) had blogposts on various topics. This included [disability law in the United States](#), [landscape photographs](#), [music director Oliver Daniel](#), [COVID-19](#), [sign language](#), [guided dance research tour](#), and the [legal implications](#) of the ship stuck in the Suez Canal. Also of interest were the interviews with [Lindsay Braddy](#) (head of the law cataloging team) and [Jason Zarin](#) (legal reference librarian), along with a post [by motion picture preservation specialist](#) Michael Hinton who explains what he does for his job. *Hack Library School* wrote on [graduating](#) from library school and [making expectations](#) for yourself this year with the pandemic, while I read the New York Public Library blogposts on [Josephine Baker](#) and [a reading list](#) of Asian / Pacific Islander / Desi-American people. I enjoyed reading Carrie Wade's piece on problems with [library furniture](#) that are visually appealing but isn't actually workable for patrons, the Comic Book Legal Defense Fund talking on [five library victories over censorship](#), a [defense of rainbow bookshelves](#) (even though I think organizing it by content or some other measure would be better), and [celebrating](#) the role of public libraries.

With that, let me talk about genealogy. *I Love Libraries* explained how you can [uncover your own family history](#) at libraries. Other sites focused on use of [Irish records](#), [DNA](#), and searching

for records [when doing Black genealogy work](#). Related to this is a post by a Black woman, and genealogist, who calls herself Felipe, on her site *Tracing African Roots*, one of my favorite family history sites, titled "[Are African Americans really mostly "Nigerian?"](#)" Then there is the story of the amateur genealogist who scrubbed over 200 gravestones at a Maryland cemetery (All Hallows Episcopal Church) to make them "[easier to photograph](#)." Of course, she ended up damaging the stones! Even worse, the woman who did this did not ask permission and said she didn't know she was causing damage. The stones [had stripes](#) which could only be "fixed by washing down the entire headstone," with estimates for cleaning the headstones [costing upwards of \\$10,000.](#)" Luckily, a day for volunteers to help repair the graves is being planned for the spring while the sites Billion Graves and Find A Grave distanced themselves from the genealogist. There is [a tip from The Hidden Branch](#) on the necessity of reading up on local history, with context important when looking to your ancestors, including answering questions like: What wars were going on? Who leads the country? Who was the religious leader? What major events occurred?

This connects directly to stories about history. An archives technician from NARA, Thomas Richardson, [explained](#) the rich literary history of the U.S., *Smithsonian* magazine noted that the Associated Press [turned 175 years old](#), Ellen Terrell [wrote on the hello girls](#) of World War I, and [a farmer uncovering](#) a 4,000 year old tomb in Ireland. Related to this is the American Historical Association (AHA) [signing a brief](#) that is "regarding the release of the records of two 1971 Boston, Massachusetts, grand juries that investigated the Pentagon Papers leak," wanting the release of these records. Just as important are articles on [teaching LGBTQ history](#), writing and advocacy [at the AHA](#), [historians and the future](#) of newspaper access, the [Smithsonian's COVID-19 collection](#), and how the New Orleans [was a center](#) of slave trade. The same could be said when it comes to articles [about interstate highways](#), [jazz clubs](#), the [history MA](#), the [Harlem Hellfighters](#), the [Angel Island Immigration Station](#), and feeling like [an interloper](#) as a minority student.

That brings me to the final part of this newsletter. April Hathcock [wrote a poem](#) on justice, George Floyd, and injustice in the U.S. *The Nib* had illustrations on how [private contractors will remain](#) in Afghanistan, [ways](#) that George Floyd was defended, [militarization of police](#), more [money for police](#) departments, and the [never-ending](#) news cycle. *Smithsonian* magazine noted how the U.S. [returned](#) 500 artifacts to Mexico, that humans have altered [97% of the Earth's land](#) through habitat and species loss, and a [new study](#) pushing the origins of human-driven global change back thousands of years. Others wrote [about] [on captions](#) on Zoom accounts, amplifying women's voices [on Wikiquote](#), [Latino art](#), misappropriation [of native/indigenous imagery](#) in pharmaceutical advertising, and [adding](#) image descriptions on Twitter.

That's all for this week. See you all next week!

- Burkely

# The wrestler-librarian, archives, appraisal, selection, libraries, genealogy, history, and more

This week I'll be writing about libraries, archives, and genealogy, as always, along with history, and a focus on archival appraisal. Enjoy!

*[Newsletter originally published [on May 10, 2021](#)]*



*I love this scene of the librarian in Prisoner Zero. He is literally creating records here! It's great, to say the least.*

Hello all! I hope you all had a productive week! I know this is a little different because I'm sending the newsletter today rather than Saturday or Sunday, but I wanted to send the newsletter today before the week gets away from me, and something comes up, making it harder for me to finish this newsletter for you all. This past week, I published one of my favorite posts to write yet, specifically looking at a librarian who [changes personalities with a wrestler](#) and becomes "buff" (at least that's what the characters call her), and how (and if) she bucks stereotypes or not. With that, I'd like to begin this newsletter.

This past week, there has been a lot of archives news. Some included posts from my colleagues at NSA about more documents from [the U.S. Capitol riot](#) and [U.S.-Soviet cooperation in outer space](#). I am glad to see that the Library of Congress (LOC) preservation team has a [new blog](#) titled "Guardians of Memory." They have a number of recent posts of note. One, in particular, talked about [Heat- and Solvent-Set Repair Tissues](#). Another [talked about](#)

what is involved in conservation at LOC. Of course, conservators are not archivists, but they work in the same space, together. As NARA explains it, conservators, unlike archivists who focus on content of documents, “[think about the physical makeup](#) of documents,” examining records, assessing their condition, and the materials comprising them, [recommending “remedial treatments](#) to arrest deterioration or to improve condition.” Apart from Julie Kerssen, Processing Archivist at the Seattle Municipal Archives [sharing her love](#) of archival work, there were two stories which caught my eye. The first was Margot Note’s post titled “[Appraisal of Records of Enduring Value](#).” In the post, she defines appraisal as identifying materials offered to an archives that have “sufficient value to be accessioned” and can be defined as the process of “determining the length of time records should be retained.” She then differentiates between selection and appraisal:

Although the definitions are close, nuances exist. Appraisal often gets confused with monetary appraisal, which archivists must avoid. *Selecting* is an active verb. One might argue that *appraising* is active, but it is true that the assessment of value would lead to selecting for acquisition. **Selection is also a more concise word for what the archivist does.** Archivists are...often accused of speaking in code. However, **appraisal has become the accepted term for the profession**, but selection describes what archivists do. No matter what term is used, institutions utilize a variety of processes and frameworks to build their collections.

She also notes that many factors shape appraisal like existing laws, professional norms, and issues of accountability, with appraisal the first responsibility of an archivist. She says this requires the archivists to educate themselves about “records of society and improve archival practice accordingly,” with collecting strategies and appraisal techniques developed to coordinate retention and selection. Secondly archivists must educate those creating the records about the importance of retaining records for the long term while informing the public about “the essential work of the archival profession to influence and support creators in records preservation.” She further notes that the purpose and mission of the archives plays an important role, adding that archivists consider functional characteristics, content, context, and cost-benefit analysis of “acquiring, preserving, and making these records available.” This relates to the idea of primary and secondary value, with the first including “administrative, legal, and fiscal values” of a record. The second focuses on what is known as evidential and informational values, with the latter including details about events, people, places, or subjects “other than the organization or individual who created the record,” while the former documents “operation and activities of the record-creating organization, institution, or individual.” She concludes by saying that the appraisal process is about determining whether records “have archival value” with archivists having to make decisions on “what materials have enduring value and deserve preservation over the long term.” This was undoubtedly the case when the Smithsonian Museum of African American History decided to keep records of the Freedmen’s Bureau, with the museum [currently “focusing attention](#) on the post-Civil War transition of enslaved people to freedom by making the records of the Freedmen’s Bureau accessible online”! That will be exciting, especially as a resource for genealogists. I already found a bunch of stuff on [Emmy Lou Packard](#), so I may write about that in the future.

That brings me to libraries, which obviously open this post, like always. LOC had posts about [teacher appreciation week](#), [great dictionary of Alonso de Molina](#), and [cicadas](#), while the [recent issue](#) of the LOC magazine for May / June 2021 was released, which focused on historic maps. Other stories of note include a working paper titled "[The Returns to Public Library Investment](#)," along with stories about the [1619 Project](#), [diversity](#), outdoor reading rooms [at the Brooklyn Public Library](#), [e-books](#), and [sustainability](#). That brings me to the wonderful library scenes in the film, *Elena and the Secret of Avalor* which I loved enough to include here:



In the future, I may write a post about this and the value of libraries in the film, as Sofia goes to the [secret library I wrote about](#) back in February, and [two librarians](#) in *Sofia the First*. Mrs. Higgins and an unnamed librarian.

That brings me to genealogy. I liked reading about [Irish genealogy](#), [starting your genealogy research](#), a researcher [exploring stories of people of color](#), [forensic genealogy](#), [genealogy hints](#), [fitting family history](#) into your life, and [slavery in “Indian territory”](#) (Oklahoma). But one story stood out. It wasn't the story in *Smithsonian* magazine noting that some of Europe's oldest-known modern humans [are distantly related](#) to [Indigenous people](#). Rather it was James Tanner [noting](#) that in genealogy books still matter. He noted that while there is a plethora of online resources which can “teach you about genealogy,” you need to study more books and resources, which won't be covered in a webinar or class. He noted that genealogists should use “all the available materials online or otherwise to learn what you need to know about doing research and how to do genealogy.”

That brings me to history. Reading about [medieval papal documents](#), [Operation Jack](#), [sewage analysis](#), [court historians](#), [Black Death](#), the [Wright Brothers](#), [Saint Brendan's Island](#), the [Matewan Massacre](#), and [women of influence](#) in Jupiter Hammon's world. The story in the *Smithsonian* magazine about what caused the roaring twenties is interesting and relevant to

what is happening now. [In the article](#), historians say there can't be easy comparisons between the 1920s and 1930s, because, as Peter Liebhold, curator emeritus at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, says "the experiences of the 1920s are uneven. If you make gross characterizations, you're dead wrong." The entire article is interesting and worth a read.

I'll close this newsletter with articles on various subjects. For one, there is an article [defining ableism](#), how the U.S. [is at risk](#) of an armed anti-police insurgency, a story from a Leftist and trans woman living in the rural South, who is a gun owner, [and argues](#) that "Biden's proposed gun control legislation will only help the far right. Of note are stories about how clothing [has enhanced visual storytelling](#), how the Minneapolis Police [first described](#) the murder of George Floyd, and [outrage](#) over handling of the remains of the MOVE bombing. That brings me to the plethora of illustrations in *The Nib* [criticizing the possible run](#) of the former traitorous President and [telling the story](#) of a rise (and fall) of [a] viral video star. Others talk about [consumerism](#), [fake empathy](#), urging communities [to "await"](#) facts of a police shooting, [pollution](#), [Millennials](#), [respecting "norms"](#) (from Tom Tomorrow), people [defending](#) their meat consumption (because why not), [crushing dissent](#), [Bill Gates](#) the monopolist, and [the market](#) of recycling. My favorite of all was Joey Alison Sayers comic titled "The Cis Agenda," [criticizing the hair-brained efforts of cisgender people](#) to oppress trans people, all so they can disenfranchise them. So awful, I must tell you, not some "wedge issue."

That's all for this week! Until next week. Hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# From archives to libraries, the ALA to chain codes, history to assorted topics

This week, as always, various articles about libraries, archives, genealogy, and history, will be discussed, as will related news

*[Newsletter originally published on [May 16, 2021](#)]*



*Librarian in Prisoner Zero uses his magic powers to literally bring patrons to the library; I loved this episode of this Australian animation*

Hello everyone! I hope you had a good week. Earlier this week, I reviewed one of my favorite series, [writing about a vampire librarian](#) who weeds her books, to pare them down, keeping some she likes and others she doesn't want to read anymore. This upcoming Tuesday, my review of one of the worst librarians in existence, Francis Clara Censordoll, who literally dips "objectionable" books in kerosene, will be published on my *Libraries in Popular Culture* blog, so look forward to that. I enjoyed [reading a post by Jennifer Snoek-Brown](#) where she talks about cruise ship libraries and librarians. With that, let me move forward with this newsletter.

Let me start with archives. NARA [commemorated](#) the 100th anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre while the National Archives of Australia warned, [in late April](#), that historical recordings, films and images could soon be lost, unless their budget is increased. Shannon Morreira [wrote about](#) the fire at the Jagger Library on the University of Cape Town campus, noting that burning of any part of the library is terrible "because you lose voices from the past which may carry alternative histories," and notes that archives matter to decolonizing higher education because "histories they afford us to embrace." Morreira outlined three lessons from the fire. For one, digitization is "hugely valuable, and should be well-funded" (even if it could

take hundreds of years [as was said about the Seattle National Archives](#) before its proposed closure). Secondly, climate change is putting everything at risk, including libraries. Thirdly, that losing university archives is devastating even though they are not the “only places where knowledge is made or stored.” On a related note is the [relaunch of Artbase](#), an Archive of Born-Digital Art and the [value of polaroids](#), described by the Arquives in Canada, as a “particularly fascinating type of archival evidence because a Polaroid is entirely of the moment and singular,” in a collection about a place known as the “Pussy Palace.” I liked reading about a [sound heritage project](#) in Northern Island and a [review](#) of a [book by Geoffrey Yeo](#) titled *Record-Making and Record-Keeping in Early Societies* which “investigates the beginnings of human recording practices and provides a survey of early record-making and record-keeping in societies across the world,” including non-written and written records in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, China and the Americas, drawing on recent scholarship. It sounds like an important book which could help when it comes to fictional works, even more than Ernst Posner’s [Archives in the Ancient World](#), which only covered Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, and Rome. That brings me to a recent post titled “[Why Your Organization Needs an Archives](#)” by Margot Note. She makes some good points about the value of archives. She notes that archives have a purpose to make, and preserve records of enduring value to an organization, with archives themselves as “direct by-products of an organization’s functions,” calling archival programs a worthwhile investment, and says that well-organized archival programs allow you to “identify, save, and retrieve the information you need while safely removing the material you do not.” The post wasn’t what I thought it would be, as the organizations she is talking about are presumably corporations, but could still be helpful. I say that even though I’m not on board with the business-speak terms like “return on investment.”

That brings me to libraries. Some articles noted a camel [bringing books](#) to homeschooling children in Pakistan, [digital humanities](#) initiatives in U.S. art libraries, [OER textbooks](#), and adding fair use images to people’s Wikipedia pages [as noted](#) by a librarian. There are a number of blogs from the Library of Congress, about various topics, specifically on [library acquisitions](#), [three different dance practices](#), [federal courts](#), [an 18th century Buddhist carving](#), and [women's suffrage in Switzerland](#).

Beyond that, I liked reading Alex Brown’s analysis of the ALA’s State of America’s Libraries report, beginning with [this tweet](#), criticizing [vocational awe](#) vibes, notes that libraries are not “the cure for governmental ineptitude and negligence,” and pointed to the problem of the “lack of broadband on tribal lands and rural areas.” She asked whether “the challenges on programs and meeting rooms” is accurate, saying it could include those who “pushed back against libraries hosting transphobic speakers...[or] getting a slavery reenactment cancelled,” says that librarians should “push back against harmful, offensive books,” criticized the ALA for praising “libraries that remained open during COVID,” noting that changes to e-book lending terms from big publishers “were short lived,” says libraries should be ashamed for turning off their wi-fi when they were closed, and adding that libraries should not get thanks for “extending wifi to their parking lots or buying chromebooks and hotspots” as this is the “least possible effort.” She criticized the “Advocacy in Action” section, with nothing about [#ProtectLibraryWorkers](#) or [#CloseTheLibraries](#) (advocacy on Twitter), not creative virtual programming, criticizing short-term digital library cards, saying it does not make librarians heroes when registering

undocumented people for library cards, noticed how the ALA did not “include ways in which school and academic libraries have struggled to provide learning services during the pandemic (and before),” and noted that the ALA is “praising itself for putting out an empty BLM statement...[which] did not advocate for dealing with institutional racism within libraries.” She adds that how inequities in collection development came about, through institutional racism, questions if the library profession “worked to address internal inequities in 2020,” says that there was “no mention of Asian Americans or Latinx, Indigenous, or immigrant POC people” in the report, and concludes that the report “seems like a lot of money was spent on something that probably could’ve been a bunch of blot [sic] posts...No follow-through, analysis, or self-reflection. No strategies for moving forward,” arguing that it “feels like ALA built itself a pedestal then hauled itself up there and then wrote a “report” about it.” Her tweet thread speaks for itself. I didn’t summarize ever part here, while noting some of the bigger points. I’d recommend reading the whole thread to get her full perspective. It gave me pause in that I should be more critical of the ALA and its pronouncements.



[Admiral Rampart](#), says, in the most recent episode of *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*, that [chain codes](#) are the “foundation” of the empire itself, calling efforts to put the newly-formed empire on a firm footing of “utmost importance.”

There is a lot of genealogy-related news to share from the past week. You might be scratching your head and wondering how an animated series, like *Star Wars: The Bad Batch* and its use of “chain codes,” relates to genealogy. It is pretty simple, actually. As the [CBR reviewer writes](#), “...perhaps we can think of a chain code as a cross between a police database and Ancestry.com.” This is because [these chain codes](#) contain “biographical information that goes beyond birth date and home address” and it continued to be used by the New Republic. It was described as an “unique identification marker.” Some interesting posts noted that [many Americans](#) are descended from Germans, while noting the history of [Black cemeteries](#), and [organizing](#) your family history. I liked [reading about](#) a book that “presaged and helped spur the effort to stop the practice of patenting unmodified genes,” the [Caribbean Genealogy Library](#), the Mayo parish [just before](#) the famine, genealogy tips to [research logs](#), and [Irish emigration](#), not only to U.S. and Canada.

There were various articles about history I read this past week. This included posts about [Georgia voting restrictions](#), [clothing scrapbook](#), National Park Service [unveiling](#) new Underground Railroad sites, history of [the National Archives building](#) in D.C., the 1722 murder which [spurred Indigenous pleas](#) for justice, [refugee history](#), and [mapping survivor testimonies](#) from the Holocaust. *Smithsonian* magazine explained possible changes [to Stone Mountain Park](#), 19th-century [America's partisan warfare](#), [how Indigenous peoples](#) in British Columbia tended 'Forest Gardens,' the [history of Blackface](#) (it is older than you might think), and asking whether [Shakespeare based](#) his masterpieces on works by an "obscure Elizabethan playwright."

That brings me to the last section of this newsletter on assorted topics. One writer [argued that](#) writers should know about search engine optimization (SEO), social media, copyright, and the publishing industry. Others talked about [metadata](#), [deciphering the mysteries of migratory birds](#), [tutorial](#) in creating 18th century coastlines for fantasy maps, the [ransom attack](#) on the Colonial Pipeline, Republicans [grumbling](#) about Critical Race Theory and announcing bills to restrict it, and legislation and book bans [targeting teaching](#) about social justice and racism in schools. As always, *The Nib* had insightful and hilarious illustrations. This included topics such as a search and seizure [in Rudy Giuliani's apartment](#), Instagram "[accidentally](#)" [blocking](#) posts about the Aqsa Mosque while allowing Qanon to remain, changes women have [endured over the years](#), [panic buying](#) of gasoline, [using Peanuts characters](#) to lampoon those who participated in the Capitol riot, and how Mickey Mouse has a racist origin story and argues that the [mouse is a minstrel](#) in and of itself. My favorite, however, was one by Kasia Babis about a meat-eating man [who blabs on about meat](#), the vegan man leaves, and the meat-eater declares that vegans are "weird." The point is the meat-eater has the problem, not the vegan, obviously.

That's all for this week. Until next week! Hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Pop culture, archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and various illustrations

This week I'm focusing on the same topics as always, while mentioning upcoming posts which review libraries in some of my favorite animated series.

*[Newsletter originally published [on May 23, 2021](#)]*



*Public library as shown in the beginning of “True Colors,” the season 2 finale of *Amphibia*, which I am really glad I watched. I even [put together a thread](#) about the library-related moments in the beginning of that episode*

Hello everyone! I hope you had a good and productive week. Apart from beginning to write a review for my genealogy blog about *Mira, Royal Detective*, I published a post [about Francis Clara Censordoll](#), the librarian in *Moral Orel*, who takes censorship to extremes, and the non-neutrality of librarians. I have a post upcoming, on Tuesday, about the Sieran Academy Library in *Dear Brother*, a 1991-1992 anime. So, look forward to that. With that, let me begin my newsletter.

When it comes to archives, Samantha “Sam” Cross [reviewed a 1988 episode](#) of *The Smurfs* titled “Archives of Evil,” and notes the archives is in the library basement, can only be accessed by “unlocking a gate and descending the staircase into a level that is barely distinguishable from the floor above.” Even so, the archives factor very little into the episode, despite the title. This reminds me of how in a few episodes of *Sofia the First*, the name “secret library” is in the title,

but...the library barely features in the episode at all! It was interesting to [read feedback](#) and recommendations following Black Lives and Archives Forums from the SAA's Diversity Committee, the upcoming collection [titled \*Crippling the Archive: Disability, Power, and History\*](#), which will explore the relationship between disability and the archive, and the [announcement](#) of the Performing Arts Web Archive. In other news, NARA [talked about](#) the release of the 1950 census, [collaboration](#) between University Libraries at Virginia Tech and NARA, the Teaching with Primary Sources ([TPS](#)) Collective, and [more about](#) privacy and confidentiality issues within archival collections. Otherwise, there were stories about documents [digitally saved](#) from a courthouse which caught fire, the [acquisition](#) of ProQuest, and the Winter / Spring 2021 edition of [Performance!](#), the newsletter of SAA's Performing Arts Section, and a site specifically about [Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage from the National Archives](#).

That brings me to libraries. Apart from the Season 2 finale of *Amphibia*, shown at the beginning of this post, one of the new episodes of *Mira, Royal Detective* in the past week, has Mira helped by her two mongoose friends, [returning books to the mobile library](#). Additionally, [an upcoming episode](#) of *The Owl House*'s second season, has the characters Luz and Amity journeying into "the most dangerous section of the library." *Hack Library School* had posts this past week about [self-care](#), [decoding job posts](#), and [getting a library job](#). Library of Congress (LOC) had all sorts of blogposts in the past week on various subjects. This includes [an interview](#) with the daughter of Shizuko Ina, named Satsuki Ina, a young Japanese American woman incarcerated in 1942, and the story of their incarceration in World War II, [old and highly](#) flammable movies, a report [about recognition](#) of foreign passports, and [DC Comics](#). *American Libraries* published their 2021 report on library systems, similar to the one I talked about in last week's newsletter (["State of America's Libraries Report 2021"](#)), except [this one](#) focuses on advancing library technologies in challenging times, as the tagline goes, and seems much more technical than that report, even from a quick read. Finally, there were stories about the Internet Archive [digitizing records](#), [library cutbacks](#) in South Australia, [diverse authors and creators](#), and a [new deal](#) between the Digital Public Library of America and Amazon Publishing to lend digital content in libraries.

In the past week, genealogy came to the front pages. This upcoming week, a federal judge, Laurel Beeler [will hear](#) the case *Callahan et al v. Ancestry.com Inc.*, which Ancestry urging her to again dismiss a case "alleging the company uses and profits from photographs and personal details in its U.S. school yearbooks database without consent." Beeler heard the case [back in March](#), dismissing it, saying that the plaintiffs did not have standing, and argued that the company is "immune from liability under the Communications Decency Act." I liked reading about [a research guide](#) about fire insurance maps and [a guide on](#) interpreting the maps, along with posts about family [lineage in Quebec](#), Kathleen Brandt writing about [10 research trips to fast forward](#), a post who talks about [the "secret life](#) of their Grandma, and an article about genetic genealogy and [cold cases](#). The same could be said [about links](#) for online genealogy research and various ways [to jumpstart](#) your Eastern European research.

I'd like to talk a little about history. Some wrote about the [transnational cultures of print](#), the [1940s fight](#) against the Equal Rights Amendment was bipartisan and crossed ideological lines (an excerpt from Rebecca DeWolf's upcoming book, *Gendered Citizenship*), and how medieval manuscripts [reveal the reading communities](#) of the early Middle Ages. Some articles [debated](#)

how history should be taught in classrooms across the U.S., a Twitter hashtag with some historians presenting “[evidence to disrupt, correct, or fill out](#) the oversimplified and problematic messages too often communicated by the nation’s memorial landscape,” with many historians connecting with each other, Washington and Oregon [passing bills](#) to make Juneteenth a holiday, and [the creation](#) of the National Archives building.

[https://youtu.be/lHg-GAq\\_quw](https://youtu.be/lHg-GAq_quw)

There are some stories on other topics I’d like to share. This includes [confidentiality and data utility](#) in the US census, and [decolonizing](#) public health in India. Like always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. This included one lampooning those who talk about the [supposedly secret “gay agenda”](#) (no such agenda actually exists), the right-wing “outrage cycle) from the [always poignant Tom Tomorrow](#), the [changing way](#) to reserve videos, [employers wanting](#) people to take their terrible jobs back, the [“blindness” of those](#) on all sides of the debate over Palestine. Some focused on [a “conservative” detective](#) in a Tom Tomorrow cartoon, saying attacks on Palestine were justified by “attacking” Hamas [which provided cover](#) for U.S. military aid to go to Israel, the [supposedly “rough”](#) relationship between Biden and Netanyahu, and about the rationalization, by Jewish settlers, [of attacks on Palestine](#). These were only some of the illustrations, as many more were published in the past week, but there were so many that I’ve had to put them in newsletters for future weeks instead of this one.

That’s all for this week. I hope you have a great week ahead.

- Burkely

# Quiet libraries, fiction, CIA operations, the value of archives, family history, and Black origins in the Americas

There's a lot to talk about this week, so much that I'm going up to the email length limit. Anyway, happy Memorial Day!

*[Newsletter originally published [on May 31, 2021](#)]*



*This joke about the Dewey Decimal System in The Owl House episode “Lost in Language” is kinda funny, I gotta say*

Hello everyone! I hope you had a productive week and I wish you all a happy Memorial Day. Last Tuesday, I wrote about [the quiet “sanctum” of a school library](#) in *Dear Brother*, a 1990s anime, with one character complaining that libraries aren't as quiet as they used to be, on my *Libraries in Popular Culture* blog. On Wednesday, my review of the series, *City of Ghosts*, [was published on the Geekiary](#), the second post I've written on that review website up to this point. The same day, my friend published a [newest fictional work](#), which includes a section about libraries! In the work, my friend juxtaposes one of the protagonists, Elena, snoring in the library, which is called “one of the only quiet places in all Avalor, including in Avalor City, not bustling with people.” Not all libraries are quiet, as there has been a move, especially among public libraries, to make them community centers, which draw in people, who can be loud.

Anyway, I am excited that the collection of records I worked on for the National Security Archive, consisting of thousands of declassified memos from the last two years Rumsfeld was Defense Secretary, [is available!](#) Currently, I am working on a collection about CIA covert operations from 1953 to 1961, specifically on records from 1954-1957, with my other team members working on other years. In the next two years, I'll be working with records about climate change, the Afghanistan War, Iraq, and nuclear nonproliferation from 1969 to 1977. So, that should be exciting. With that, let me move on to the rest of my newsletter.

A new issue of *Archives Outlook* [was published earlier this month](#). Many archives issues are discussed within this publication. This includes the ever-important issue of [archival compensation](#). In terms of attracting and connecting with patrons, there are articles about, for instance, [donor relations and access](#), [building an email campaign](#), [assessing audiovisual materials](#), and most important of all, convincing those in the world, as a whole, that: archives continue to [matter](#). In the latter article, Laura Millar, author of *A Matter of Facts: The Value of Evidence in the Information Age*, argues that laws and regulations should be modernized, use of technologies, tools, and social media ethical, spreading the message that records are valuable for history, justice, and equity, and continuing to inspire the public. She also says that archivists should be ready to talk to ANYONE about archives, having an elevator speech at the ready. I think this recommendation could put too much pressure on archivists themselves, who may be stressed out, overworked, have a terrible work environment, or some other issue. I don't see a problem with archivists saying why archives are important, but they should decide when and where to do it, on their terms. She also calls for reaching out to other groups concerned about data management, misinformation, and social media companies, and other related actions.

Other articles focus on [commemorating military casualties](#), preparing for the [release of the 1950 U.S. Federal census](#), the value of liberatory memory work when it comes to archives, as argued by [Michelle Caswell in her new book](#), *Urgent Archives*, which uncovers how "dominant western archival theories and practices are oppressive by design," according to [the book description](#). There were also articles focused on [working apart](#), the [2021 SAA election results](#), and calls for [archivists to continue a culture of giving](#), among many other topics. There is also a story about how users have trouble finding NARA records they are looking for, with [the question of whether AI can help](#) make records more accessible. In other NARA-related news, David Ferriero wrote about the value of [acknowledging Indigenous history](#) at the College Park facility, which was once the home of the Piscataway People. There were also stories about [moving of British Parliament records](#) to save historic documents, engaging in redescription as a way to reprocess existing records. At the Pennsylvania State University's Eberly Family Special Collections, specifically the Luis Alberto Sánchez papers, there is currently [working being done to "promote its accessibility and use](#) through bilingual description and notes describing the papers' curatorial history." Just as important were the further Q&As with Heather Briston about [third-party privacy](#), [tribal and Indigenous records](#), along with Margot Note arguing that archival standards should be used in order to [make data more exportable](#), and the [poor record](#) of the Library and National Archives, with a 1983 Canadian law strangling historical access.



*Gabe, Naomi, Dona Paloma, Elena and Mateo visit the secret library in an episode of Elena of Avalor. Libraries often appear in this series.*

That brings me to libraries. The Library of Congress had posts about [cicadas](#), [Memorial Day](#), [re-opening](#) four reading rooms (on May 20), [native Hawaiian law](#), Asian-American printmakers and photographers [at the library](#), and new rare books [recently acquired](#) by the library. Otherwise, there was an article I learned about thanks to a tweet [from Violet Fox](#), about the [invisibility Asian-Americans faced](#) in the Dewey Decimal system from 1876 to 1996, which undoubtedly continued after that. There were articles also on various topics, such as, [Indigenous literature](#), systems of surveillance [built by library vendors](#), deconstructing power structures of libraries [in order to imagine](#) new futures, and libraries as “[information fiduciaries](#).”

When it came to genealogy, there were some interesting articles and posts I came across. Some focused [on Irish emigration](#), while others were about [finding addresses](#) and locations of ancestors, and the tip that you should [always look](#) at indexes of records, because you might be surprised what you find. Other scattered articles highlighted the [value of remembering](#) lost ones, [researching family history](#), [remembering](#) Civil War ancestors, [family names](#) in France and Nouvelle-France from 1604-1759, and the [April 2021 newsletter](#) of Midwest Computer Genealogists. Also, Ancestry added new tags for “slave owner,” “free person of color,” and “enslaved person,” as [I discovered on my own](#). However, you still can’t add in enslaved people as related to White people without going through “traditional” family structures. Nope. So, they really need to fix that, pronto.

That leads me to history. *Smithsonian* magazine is always strong in this area. This included Mexico City [marking the 500th anniversary](#) of the fall of Tenochtitlán on May 22, [the story](#) of L.A.’s Lowrider Car Clubs, a Louisiana museum [remembering](#) a yacht which trafficked enslaved Africans long after the slave trade was abolished, an Italian cave [holding clues](#) as to

neanderthal life, and [voices of women leaders](#) in science, technology, and innovation. Jake Wynn, director of interpretation at the National Museum of Civil War Medicine, wrote about how one museum [navigated the pandemic](#), while others wrote about the [legacies of Quebec Act](#), the Continental Army in the [Upper Ohio](#), the [Harada House](#), and the first Africans entering the Americas, long before they were brought to Virginia in bondage. In [the article](#) on the latter subject, by [Annette Gordon-Reed](#), a Black female historian who famously wrote about the Hemings family, Thomas Jefferson, and Monticello, with books like *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family* and *On Juneteenth*, she writes about this, noting:

...a “Negro” named Estebanico...traveled throughout what would become Texas. Estebanico’s journey across Texas as an interpreter for Cabeza de Vaca **made him one of the first people of African descent to enter the historical record in the Americas.** He was part of a cohort of African people who predated plantation slavery in the Americas, and had stories and legacies outside that institution...St. Augustine, Florida...[is] **where race-based slavery, as an organized system, began on American soil**, established by the Spanish as early as 1565. Enslaved and free African laborers helped build the settlement and its fortifications...Estebanico came to the Americas with the man who enslaved him, Andrés Dorantes, and Cabeza de Vaca, two of the leaders of a 300-person expedition to Florida and lands west.

I knew a little about this before reading her article, but it was still interesting nonetheless, as it makes clear that the arrival on August 20, 1619, of enslaved Africans to Jamestown, was not the beginning of Black history in the Americas, nor the “beginning of two and a half centuries of slavery in North America” as [History.com incorrectly declares](#) in their article on the subject. She rightly points out that experiences of other Black people and communities have been pushed away as U.S. history focuses “intensely on what happened within the boundaries of the British colonies, and on the perspective of English-speaking people,” not on those in colonies controlled by other European powers. She also notes that “people of African descent...occupy a special place in the narrative of the rise and fall of European nations in North America.” This is her [third article in The Atlantic](#) and I hope she writes more there.

There are some other subjects I’d like to discuss in this newsletter. For one, *Smithsonian* magazine noted that the X-Wing starfighter from *Star Wars* [will soon be](#) in the National Air and Space Museum and noted how algorithms discern our mood [based on what we write online](#). I guess that algorithm can guess how I feel right now when writing this newsletter then, ha. Good luck with that, silly algorithm. Apart from [a review of the final part](#) of Theo Angelopoulos’ *Trilogy of Silence, Landscape in the Mist* (1988), there were, as always, wonderful illustrations from *The Nib*. They cover subjects such as [the creepy new reality](#) of smart devices, Mark Zuckerberg [paying](#) for an island in Hawaii, Jeff Bezos getting [a new yacht, the hot summer](#) for this year’s brood of cicadas, [history being written](#) by the victors (as lampooned by Tom Tomorrow), how banks ripped off Americans and [destroyed Black wealth](#), the [delusion](#) of “inclusion” in the U.S. military, and [a purse thief](#).



*The secret library shown in the final episode of Elena of Avalor*

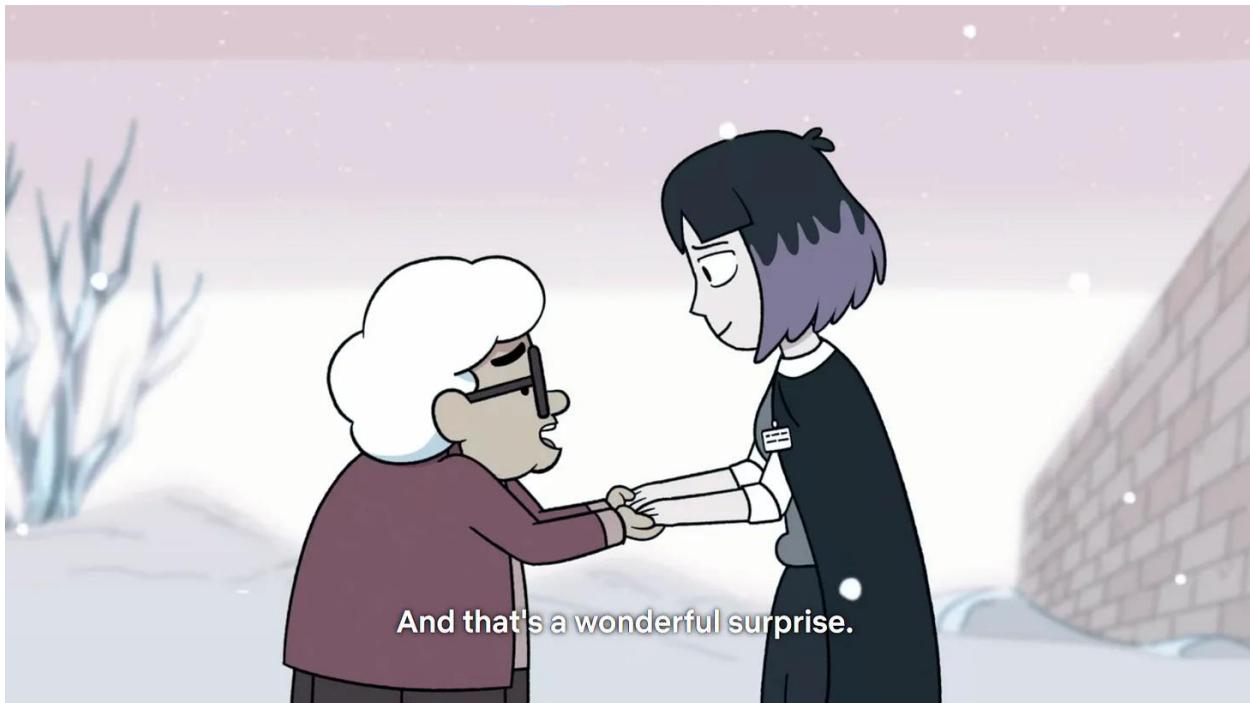
That's all for this week! Hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Librarian-soldiers, bureaucrats, e-book licensing, roots work, the value of history, and more!

This week I'll focus on archives, libraries, genealogy, and history related articles, along with those on other topics.

*[Newsletter originally published [on June 6, 2021](#)]*



*Kaisa, a librarian, in Hilda, with an elderly patron named Tildy*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good, and hopefully productive, week. In the past week, I published two pop culture reviews. One focused on librarian-soldiers and the never-ending "library war" [against censorship in Library War](#), one of my favorite anime. The other post asked whether an underground mailroom in a recent webcomic I read [has "archivy vibes."](#) With that taken care of, let me begin this newsletter.

Earlier this week, Samantha Cross, who I have mentioned many times in this newsletter in the past, [reviewed a character named Raven Inkwell](#) and asked if they are an archivist, determining they are just a bureaucrat. This makes Inkwell a little like Hermes Conrad in *Futurama*, I suppose, whose whole job is to be a bureaucrat, even singing a whole song about this, [literally!](#) There were posts about [indexing of poor relief records](#), [pushing for](#) a bigger NARA budget, the [blues and the gay community](#), a post on Northwest Archivists [introduced](#) a new archivist-in-

residence, UNESCO publishing [a digital exhibit](#) about the UNESCO Radio Unit from 1947 to 1990, and Preservica focused on more ways to quickly build and manage a digital archive, [using their Starter program](#). Also of note was the Spring 2021 newsletter of the SAA's Archivists and Archives of Color. In [this newsletter](#), records about the 1968 uprising in Kansas City and the gospel choir at Northwestern University were discussed, as was a new digital collection on Rev. William A. Jones, Jr., and assorted updates.

With that, let me talk about libraries. There was promising news that a bill ensuring that “public libraries the right to license and lend e-books that are available to consumers” is now state law! While the Association of American Publishers (AAP) [expressed their opposition](#), library advocates were glad to see it pass. I sympathize with them more than the AAP which only advocates for big publishers. The Library of Congress had posts [about LGBTQ ancestors](#) buried in the Congressional Cemetery, [damaged books](#), innovations in handcrafted [and art books](#), honoring [Asian-Americans](#), a new research guide [which focused](#) on the Louisiana Purchase, a brief history [of something unique](#): wind mapping, and [making](#) models of ancient books. Jessica Fitzpatrick wrote about the [value of reading](#), Joann and Kenneth C. Davis [argued](#) for the importance of school libraries, Amy Burroughs [noted](#) that local libraries help to address digital inequity, Siviwe Bangani [wrote about](#) academic libraries battling against misinformation during COVID-19, and Alexia MacClain [wrote on](#) how vintage supplies kept libraries running through the pandemic. At some point, I'll contribute to [the online directory](#) of librarians and library and information science and services professionals. In the past week I learned about more libraries in popular culture, with [a character](#) in *Mira, Royal Detective*, designing a library and an episode of *Cardcaptor Sakura* where characters go to a library, as shown below:



This brings me to genealogy. In the [May 2021 newsletter](#) of the Midwest Computer Genealogists, there were articles about the Spanish fur trading post of St. Louis, researching Missouri repositories, land surveys, and Missouri pioneers. Marian Bulford wrote about [her American cousin](#), Donna Moughty argues [the importance](#) of separating truth from blarney, Emma Maxwell [writes on](#) unraveling lies, myths and cover-ups in genealogy, Carol [notes](#) the value of census records, and *Ancestral Findings* [notes the importance](#) of looking at marriage records in genealogical research. Apart from all this, the *Irish Times* had an article [about the Irish roots](#) of an Irish actor, Mary Winston Nicklin [noted](#) that there has been a spike in family history trips to Europe, and PR Newswire reported that [africanancestry.com is becoming](#) a “path to Sierra Leone citizenship” for Black people who can trace their roots to that country, all by [using DNA results](#). While DNA testing is only part of roots work, for some, more than others, it can be an important part of figuring out your roots!

There were interesting articles and posts about history I read recently. *Smithsonian* magazine argued [how the push for statehood](#) for Oklahoma led a beacon of racial progress to oppression and violence, that a long-lost manuscript [contains a searing eyewitness account](#) of Tulsa massacre, while [noting that](#) citizen historians transcribed key papers about the massacre, and talking about artifacts left behind [from the massacre](#). *Smithsonian* [noted](#) that scientists have unearthed the oldest-known human grave in Africa, Kenneth Durr comparing the gas shortage

over the Colonial Pipeline [to the 1973 oil crisis](#), Lynn Weinstein of the Library of Congress [writing about rationing](#) during World War II, and a college student [decoding](#) the data hidden in Inca knots. I loved hearing [about the Tulsa artist](#) who unveiled a Trail of Tears mural for the Museum of Native American History, and the [interconnection of race and disease](#) in the United States, in terms of who died from tuberculosis.

In the final part of this newsletter, I'd like to mention a few other articles. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* [interviewed students with disabilities](#) who say that colleges should NOT return to normal (which I'll agree with), while *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* noted that inaccuracies in Google's health-based knowledge panels leads to misconceptions about infectious disease transmission. *Nature* [concluded that](#) deforestation reduces rainfall and agricultural revenues in the Brazilian Amazon, the *LA Times* [wrote about](#) how the Getty Museum battles bugs, and Rodrigo Ochigame analyzed what he termed "[algorithms of oppression](#)." As always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. They focused on, specifically: conservative fears of [supposedly "woke" people](#), [the "interview"](#) with one proponent of the Flat Earth theory, dogs as the best friend of gentrification due to [their racism](#) toward Black people, and West Virginia [giving away](#) guns as an incentive for people to get vaccines, a terrible idea if true.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Archives in popular culture, libraries, values in roots work, history, and beyond

This week I'll be writing, as always, about archives, libraries, genealogy, and other related subjects. Enjoy!

*[Newsletter originally published [on June 13, 2021](#)]*



*Unnamed (and uncredited) librarian in an episode of Marvin Mystery, who justifiably gets angry, at Marvin, the show's protagonist, for going into the basement of the library without permission*

Good early afternoon everyone! I hope you all had a productive week. I published a post looking at [10 amazing libraries in animation](#). Likely, it will be the last list of amazing / beautiful / stunning libraries I publish on there. My number of posts on that blog is slowing down and soon I may put it on a temporary hiatus. We will see what happens. With that, let me move on with the rest of my newsletter.

In the world of archives, my colleagues at the NSA (the good NSA, not the one that spies on you) wrote about [the Israeli attack](#) on Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981, the [Corpus Christi massacre](#)

in Mexico in 1971, and arrests creating [the first possibility](#) of justice for victims of Guatemalan death squads. In terms of archives in popular culture, Samantha Cross had [a post](#) about *Mystic Archives of Dantalian*. She described it much better than what I can come up with in [my review last September](#), noting that “Dalian is referred to as both an archives and the biblioteca as if the two were the same,” and calls Huey’s access to Dalian as “a clusterfuck of sexual politics wrapped up in a very short sequence.” She also noted that the very concept of an archives is absent, with “no organization or arrangement of the materials,” and noted that the title has no significance apart from making it attractive to the audience. She concludes by noting that since archives are less known and understood in pop culture media, they are “the go-to alternate term when a creator doesn’t want to use the word library,” with an archives being whatever a creator wants because there isn’t a “solid idea of what an archives is in pop culture for anyone outside the profession to protest.” I agree with what she is saying about archives, as she is completely right.

I [talked a little with her about it on Twitter](#) if you are interested in reading that. AP compiled an analysis of police misconduct record laws [in all 50 states](#), while the Hingham Archives [focused on Marion Teague](#) getting an award for “researching and preserving the history of Black and Indigenous people in Hingham,” the SAA’s Web Archiving Section examining how voices of marginalized communities at Arizona State University have been [preserved with web archiving](#), the [importance](#) of incorporating DEIA and archival compensation recommendations at the SAA, and John Henry Adams [discussing](#) the Women and the Temperance Movement Primary Source Set in *The American Archivist Reviews Portal*. Also worth reading is the [May/June 2021 issue](#) of *The Archival Outlook*.

There were some wonderful blogs about libraries which I read in the past week, including some on flexibility in [a MLIS program](#), recommendations for [mental health books](#), [changing roles](#) of libraries, and why libraries [should have](#) dedicated social media pages. It was exciting to hear about [a renovation](#) of a public library in Manhattan and an event [on June 3](#) titled “Manuscript Research Orientation Featuring LGBTQ Topics.” Despite these positives, public libraries need money for improvements, with a recent article [noting that](#) “the average public library building is 40 years old, but hundreds are more than 100 years old,” summarizing an ALA study. The findings are, honestly, not that surprising for me to hear, as it might be, in some cases, less expensive for cash-strapped library systems to use an existing building for a public library than building a new one in its place. Just as important is [the importance](#) of school libraries, a [webinar on old companies](#) from the Library of Congress on June 9, and [the new law](#) in Maryland I talked about last week.

Then we get to genealogy. There is [a helpful guide](#) on using local and family history photographs to tell the stories of your ancestors, genealogists writing on the value of using [genealogy dead ends](#), [DNA matches](#), [family trees](#), and [a story](#) about systemic racism. That last post leads to what was said last month, P.J. Elias, [a GenZGenealogist at The Hidden Branch](#), who had one of their Tuesday Tips on “Presentism.” Elias defined this as the concept of viewing people in the past by current morals, arguing that ancestors should be viewed “within the world that they lived in,” and that we “must not put our morals on the past.” Elias goes on to say, after saying that many amateur genealogists often miss this, that “we as a group need to get better at

looking at historical events and people in a neutral manner,” and add that they hope “that you will start looking at your ancestors in a kinder light, they were products of their time.”

I can understand the sentiment of [Elias](#) and agree with giving ancestors the proper historical context in an attempt to explain their actions the best way that we can. However, this only goes so far. For instance, it is accepted, nowadays, that slavery is wrong. But, in the past, especially among White people in the United States, it was generally justified as the way things are. Should we not criticize our ancestors who held people in forced bondage, bought and sold human beings, or even traded them? Some of my ancestors, for full disclosure, have been deeply intertwined with the slave trade and slavery itself in the Americas. I see no issue with criticizing them for these actions. The same goes for those who literally burned villages, crops, or scalped Indigenous people. If we went by the norms of the time that these actions occurred, they would be seen as acceptable, as most White settlers did not object. We could excuse these actions and declare “oh, they were just products of their time, it made sense then.” However, if we use current morals, it would, hopefully, be seen as reprehensible. We should recognize what role our ancestors played in society at every level and how it impacted other people.

I further object to the idea that people and historical events should be looked at in a “neutral manner.” As Kamrin Baker, [editor in chief of \*The Gateway\* said](#), “the truth is not neutral,” with Amy Beecham, a freelance identity writer, adding “when you’re in a position of privilege in society, you shouldn’t be neutral to what goes on, even if you’re not directly affected.” The same applies to genealogy, which is still, despite more prominence of Black genealogy, Asian genealogy, Indigenous genealogy, and genealogy efforts by people of color, a field dominated by White people, especially White women. When Elias wants genealogists to be “neutral,” he appears to be referring to what Merriam-Webster calls “objective,” or “expressing or dealing with facts or conditions as perceived without distortion by personal feelings, prejudices, or interpretations.” I can understand why this makes sense when it comes to professional publications or news articles in mainstream publications. However, genealogy is such a personal endeavor for many, it is inevitable that their feelings, interpretations, or prejudices will be integrated into their roots work, whether they like it or not. And that’s ok! I’d even say that some of my original writings about my ancestors were too objective and that I am moving toward more harshly criticizing some of my ancestors, not treating them with kid gloves. The time for that thinking is over. We need to confront the terrible actions of the past, especially by our ancestors, even if it is painful to do so. If we don’t, we can’t overcome them in the future.

<https://youtu.be/DuaNTmmAGQY>

That brings me to history. *Smithsonian* magazine examined [the grief](#) of Mary Todd Lincoln, [the discovery](#) of a victim of the Mount Vesuvius eruption, the history [of Master Lock](#), why a [200-year-building in Morocco](#) is a U.S. National Historic Landmark, women’s history [in the United States](#), [Mathew Brady’s](#) Civil War photographs, [the story](#) of Effa Manley who “advocated for Black rights as a Negro Leagues team owner in the 1930s and ‘40s,” and how [a rare silver coin](#) found in Maryland. *Perspectives on History* had articles on various subjects, specifically [deepfakes](#) and [history podcasts](#). I thought their [article about contextualizing history](#) was

interesting, with the author, Alex Pinelli, noting that he teaches “histories that professional historians have long abandoned,” saying that [he tries to “contextualize the past](#) and help students to understand complexities,” not to renounce something, noting a class he taught about Christopher Columbus, noting his students “treated their subject seriously and one another with respect.” Some additional articles I read in the past week focused on [Chinese Exclusion Act case files](#) and archaeologists [using techniques](#) to get their dates of Indigenous history right.

There were other subjects I’d like to focus on in his newsletter which fall outside the purview of subject areas like libraries, archives, genealogy, or history. *Smithsonian* magazine [reviewed the true story](#) of ‘The Underground Railroad’ (a current series on a streaming platform), scientists finding plutonium made in outer space [on the ocean floor](#), China’s Zhurong rover [landing on Mars](#) which cements the country as “a major player in modern space exploration,” asking whether climate fiction readers [can reach people](#) in ways scientists can’t, and that while [about 50 billion birds](#) populate Earth, four species, in particular, predominate: house sparrow, European starling, ring-billed gull, and barn swallow. I liked reading [a LA Times opinion piece](#) by Fernanda Matias which argued that Latinx discrimination is linked to under-representation. They noted that only 4.5% of the characters in the 100 top-grossing movies, from 2007-2018, were Latinx, while only 3% of those films featured “Latinx lead or co-lead roles.” From 2000 to 2009, Afro-Latinx representation in film was 0.6% and Afro-Latinos were only “1.3% of all supporting actor appearances on television.”

The piece noted, rightly, in its conclusion that: “Latinos are not a single entity, but our culture consists of several nationalities, each bearing its own unique traditions. All Latinx individuals hold a distinctive story that should be portrayed for others to see themselves reflected on screen.” Apart from these pieces, *Wired* magazine had an article [outlining a case](#) for letting people work from home forever. As always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. This included ones about [stressing out](#) over whether something is a side effect of the vaccine or not, [the truth](#) about occupied Palestine, bosses [pushing people](#) to get back in the office and not work from home, the [imaginary friends](#) of Joe Manchin, and [corporate pinkwashing](#) for their own profits, and ICE police [comforted](#) that Kamala Harris declared to Guatemalans that they not come to the U.S.

That’s all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# NARA's new report on systemic racism, libraries in popular culture, genealogy, history, and more

This week I'll be writing about the same topics as always in this special Juneteenth newsletter, published on Saturday rather than Sunday as I usually do. Enjoy!

*[Newsletter originally published on [June 19, 2021](#)]*



*Please no learning at the stake... yikes! This is from the same episode of The Owl House that I mentioned in last week's newsletter. And yes, there is an upcoming episode on July 10 ("Through the Looking Glass Ruins") where Luz and Amity travel to "most dangerous section" of the library, so that should be interesting*

Hello everyone! I hope everyone had a good week. Happy Juneteenth! While Neely Tucker of the Library of Congress [describes the history of Juneteenth](#), an [illustration](#) by Charis JB, noted rightly that the recognition of Juneteenth is performative despite its importance as celebrating the end of slavery (even though slavery didn't end on that day) in Confederate states. In the past week, I've written about [Archie the Archivist and preservation of analog data in Regular Show](#), and another blogpost focused on the value of knowledge, librarians, and abandoned libraries [in two animated series](#). With that, let me move to the rest of my newsletter.

Earlier this week, NARA [released](#) recommendations for combating racism in museum exhibits, employment, and archival descriptions [from an internal task force](#) called the Archivist's Task Force on Racism, which was chartered, last summer, by David Ferriero, [the Archivist of the United States](#). Recommendations proposed by the Archival Description Subgroup include collaborating and consulting with "underserved and underrepresented communities," engaging in "comprehensive reparative description program" to ensure that historical records are "described using respectful, accurate, and discoverable terminology," coupled with focusing digitization efforts on "records related to underrepresented communities."

Pages 12-16 of [the full report](#), further lays out changes such as developing "an alert for online users regarding potentially harmful content in the NARA Catalog," reviewing the "list of racist and otherwise harmful terms that have been identified in the Catalog," improving technology and interface of the catalog, correcting "under-described and over-described records in the Catalog," and developing a dedicated working group to ensure the recommendations are addressed "continually addressed as a program rather than a one-time project." On another page, it is stated that "racism is embedded in the history and current practices of NARA," noting that dismantling this structural racism will "require vast changes to NARA's work culture at every level as well as an ongoing and active commitment to anti-racist work throughout the agency's future." Hopefully, these recommendations can be translated into action and NARA can move forward in a positive way, but people should push NARA to fulfill these commitments, not take it for granted that they will be fulfilled on their own.

For those further interested, the detailed recommendations of the Archival Description Subgroup is on pages 74-95 of [the report](#) sent to Ferriero in mid-April. As such, it wasn't revised to note that NARA's Seattle facility will not be closing, a [closure halted on April 8](#).

### Archival Description Subgroup

Recommendation No.	Corresponding Staff Feedback Themes
A1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement a standardized disclaimer, banner, or warning in the Catalog about potentially harmful content.</li> <li>Publicly document changes made to Catalog descriptions to ensure transparency.</li> </ul>
A2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address the lack of transparency in the Catalog with respect to language inherited or received from creating entities vs. NARA-created language in archival description.</li> </ul>
A3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that efforts to address legacy descriptions in the Catalog account for the volume of descriptions.</li> <li>Focus on photo captions, which are among the “worst offenders.”</li> </ul>
A4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address the Catalog’s significant technical and performance issues, which are fundamental barriers to changing and improving archival description on a large scale.</li> </ul>
A5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize that racism is not only perpetuated by using offensive terms to describe underrepresented communities but also by failing to describe communities using appropriate terms.</li> <li>Draw on internal and external resources to better identify and describe records related to underrepresented communities.</li> </ul>
A6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with external stakeholders, including members of underrepresented groups and Citizen Archivists, to identify and evaluate harmful descriptions in the Catalog.</li> </ul>
A7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add language translation to the Catalog and NARA websites.</li> <li>Use Citizen Archivists to transcribe documents in languages other than English and add tags in other languages to English-language documents.</li> </ul>
A8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that efforts to address harmful descriptions in the Catalog are ongoing and not thought of as a one-time cleanup.</li> <li>Develop an ongoing program to address harmful descriptions that adapts to the needs of NARA users.</li> </ul>

*Recommendations of the sub-group summarized on page 26 of the NARA report*

Speaking of Seattle, on June 11, Ferriero [published a post](#) about the importance of acknowledging that NARA’s federal records center there sits on ancestral Indigenous land, specifically the Coast Salish, Stillaguamish, Duwamish, and Suquamish peoples. The closure of the facility was not mentioned in that post, but I imagine it is talked about internally within NARA. I don’t doubt that for a second.

Samantha “Sam” Cross [reviewed archives](#) in a comic featuring Batgirl, and [I told her](#) it reminded me of scrolls stuck inside of a tree in some episodes of *Tangled*. So, that was a nice conversation, and it connects to one of my recent posts which looks at [library/archives confusion](#) in the webcomic,  *Spells from Hell*, noting the difference between NARA and the Library of Congress. One of my colleagues at the NSA [published detailed transcripts from eight](#)

former U.S. ambassadors to Moscow, noting various perspectives on U.S.-Russia relations, while Zuzana Malicherova of the Europeana Foundation wrote about the [future of audiovisual archiving](#), Margot Note [highlighted](#) the importance of archival description, outgoing SAA executive director Nancy Beaumont [wrote on](#) her accomplishments at the SAA while there for the last 10 years, a website jointly created by the Oregon Heritage Commission, the State Library of Oregon, and Washington State Library called [Northwest Digital Heritage](#) which offers “users free access to 80,000 historical and cultural records from 60 institutions in Oregon and Washington” was [just launched](#), and some archivists are [collecting documentation](#) about the LGBTQ community in Nashville.

Then we get to libraries. Jennifer Snoek-Brown [wrote about](#) her wonderful blog, *Reel Librarians*, getting cited in scholarly discussion of reel librarians in *Library Quarterly*, *Journal of Information Management*, and *Archivaria*. There was also [a presentation by K.C. Boyd](#) about how to be an “advocate for your library and became an activist” as a librarian, on June 10, [the New York legislature passed](#) the library e-book bill, and on June 13, CNN examined whether venerable libraries get the [credit they deserve](#). There were also a discussion about attempts [by some](#) to censor LGBTQ content in a public library, articles on OverDrive acquiring Kanopy in a deal which some [called a “media empire,”](#) finding [the oldest library](#), and the Library of Congress (LOC) making it easier to preserve culturally important video games, as [described by SYFY](#). Bloggers for LOC wrote about many important topics. This included assessing the impact of sanitizing products on their collection items, [concluding](#) that “cleaning and sanitizing products should not be applied directly to paper, parchment, or bound books” as should be common sense, the [re-opening](#) of some reading rooms, [updates](#) to the Congress.gov website, engaging in preservation [by using](#) raman spectroscopy, and a [new primary source set](#) for teachers which focuses on LGBTQ activism and contributions.

With that, there are some posts and news about genealogy to share. For one, Ancestry.com, as I’ve mentioned before, [won the case](#) about digitizing people’s personal yearbooks, with the judge saying that the website did not “take advantage of any private data” when doing so and arguing that the “yearbook pictures are not private enough to warrant special protections.” So, remember that next time when you think your yearbook has private information! Otherwise, there were interesting posts about [exploring UK Census records](#), Paul Chiddicks [writing about](#) the value of obtaining death certificates for your ancestors, and, from Megan Smolenyak, a post from a couple years ago, examining [amazing women in Stephen Colbert’s family tree](#). I enjoyed reading about sorting out messes in your family tree (the person in the post [has a tree with over 29,000 ancestors!](#) That’s a lot to keep track of!), [value](#) of source citations, the [importance](#) of extracting, transcribing, and abstracting genealogical documents, and a project which is attempting to [capture genetic diversity](#) among humans and catalog missing DNA. Most fascinating of all was a post by Paul Chiddicks asking [what you will leave behind](#) for others in the future.

## In The Workplace

Recognizing Juneteenth in the workplace supports corporate diversity ideals and sends a signal that the company is truly dedicated to its diverse employee base.

**Ideal** - Decorate a conference room, lobby or workspace with a Juneteenth theme to acknowledge the day's celebration. Bring the group together for refreshments and an explanation of Juneteenth.

An extended celebration could include artifacts, dance, skits, etc. The event should be celebratory, festive and in honor of African American history. Present co-workers with Juneteenth buttons, t-shirts, etc and encourage them to wear them the remainder of the day.

**Ideal** - Challenge co-workers to present African American facts, de-bunk myths and stereotypes...

**Ideal** - Discuss company diversity initiatives and ensure employees that race and gender will never be barriers to their progress within the company.



Juneteenth Gift Basket

*Juneteenth.com [talks about](#) the celebration of the holiday in corporate-friendly language, making it clear the site, and holiday, are, seemingly, appealing to those in the corporate sector, rather than elsewhere.*

As always, *Smithsonian* magazine covered the gamut when it comes to historical topics, with articles on how Ancient Greek armies [relied on foreign mercenaries](#), World War I artifacts [revealed](#) by a melting glacier in the Italian Alps, the ill-fated idea to move the U.S. capital to St. Louis [following the end of the Civil War](#), how the statue of Edward Colston that people rightly threw in a harbor in June of last year is [now sitting in an English museum](#), and the [story of what happened](#) to Japanese American houses during incarceration, with homes of these citizens "ransacked, defaced, and even looted" with a survey after the war estimating that "80% of goods and property stored with private, non-government entities were ransacked, stolen, or sold"! Just as important were stories about [teaching history with newsreels](#), [preserving Indigenous history](#), and the official state sterilization and eugenics program in North Carolina which wasn't ended until the 1970s, as noted in a thread by Sarah Carrier, a librarian in special collections and archives, [in a Twitter thread](#).

There are a number of other topics which don't easily fit into other parts of this newsletter but should still be mentioned. The *Associated Press* [announced](#) that they will "no longer run the names of people charged with minor crimes, out of concern that such stories can have a long, damaging afterlife" online, while still naming those who engage serious crimes like "those involving violence or abuse of the public trust, or cases of a fugitive on the run." It will be interesting to see if other news outlets follow suit. *Teen Vogue* [wrote about](#) the problems of saying that going through toxic work environments is a "rite of passage" while an opinion piece in *The Diamondback* called for "[collective reckoning with mental health in the workforce](#)." In the same publication it was noted that over 500 UMD employees signed [a] petition [demanding "expanded access to telework."](#) *Perspectives on History* examined the issue of colorizing photographs from the past and [the ethics](#) of making history, the American Historical Association [objected](#) to a Texas bill which would whitewash teaching of U.S. history in schools, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* said that professors [want more guidance](#) on how to help their students struggling with mental health, and *Smithsonian* magazine [explained why](#) scientists are

studying the genetic tricks of the longest-lived animals and a Frida Kahlo retrospective debut [in Chicago suburbs](#). As always, *The Nib* had some relevant illustrations. Some of the ones I read this week focused on Bill Gates [relationship with Jeffrey Epstein](#), [appreciation of music](#) during the pandemic, [the tale](#) of the so-called “Somerton Man,” McDonald’s being hit by [a huge data breach](#), the [fallacy of so-called centrism](#) lampooned by Tom Tomorrow, attacks on protesters with vehicles (vehicle-ramming) on [the rise across the U.S.](#), and [a setback](#) from the Supreme Court of backing a Catholic foster care agency in *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, which denied LGBTQ patients. This case, I’d say, endangers LGBTQ people going forward, despite GLAAD [falsely declaring](#) it is a “victory,” as it sets the groundwork for so-called “religious freedom” rights of religious institutions to be honored by government entities in the years to come, despite the fact the ruling is limited to this single instance and not more broadly.

That’s all for this week. I hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Pop culture reviews, market-based approaches to archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and beyond

This week, I'll be talking about the same topics as always, with a focus on market-based language from NARA, challenges of digitization, proposed changes to odious library classifications, and more!

*[Newsletter originally published [on June 27, 2021](#)]*



*When you ask if the world is fictional and go totally bonkers because of it. This is from The Owl House, by the way.*

Hello all! Hope you all had a productive week. This week was relatively eventful, as this Pride month comes to a close. I published [a short post](#) about the animal librarian in *Tamberlane* and [another](#) about two “keepers of secrets,” focusing on Jocasta Nu in *Star Wars* and the unnamed records clerk in *Joker*. Additionally, I [just published a post](#) about a bun-wearing librarian shusher in one of my favorite webcomics, *Boyfriends*, and the role of spinster librarians. On Friday, I put together a [“moment” of a recent discussion by the SNAP Section](#) about so-called archival “neutrality” and activist archivists. With that, let me begin my newsletter.

There were many articles and analyses relating to archives which I'll talk about in this week's newsletter. For one, Sam Cross [wrote about](#) the problematic depiction of archives, and archivists, in a fictional book by Eva St. John, [with the help](#) of her friend, Rachel Thompson,

[who told](#) people to “read the article, not the book.” Apart from that, David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States and head of NARA, noted that the agency’s staff, [from his view](#), is working to improve how users (which he calls customers) interact with the agency’s records and resources, and delivering excellent service. This perspective, while logical and justified, is limited by the fact that he is at the top of the NARA leadership and talking about service, noting that “qualitative and quantitative market research” will be examined. This makes him sound more like he is part of a private company or a [corporate archive](#) than a public entity. Some archivists have said the reality of archivists at the present time and place is that funders [dictate a “market language of use](#) and efficiencies...whilst an ethos of managerialism strips the ethical and moral away from public services.” Others have noted that since the 1970s, government entities have been told to be economically efficient, and have to, as a result, “justify their existence in economic and market-based rather than social and cultural terms.” As such, government entities often privilege, as [argued by Ciaran B. Trace](#), “economic and market-based approaches over notions of accountability, responsiveness, and the social good.” It seems that Ferriero is doing some of the former rather than the latter but is also trying to balance both approaches.

The University of Washington, Special Collections began a podcast series in February, [titled \*Beyond Scope and Content\*](#), which “tells the hidden stories of women filmmakers in the Film Archive.” Apart from this, there were articles about [digital archives of Black life](#), the [importance](#) of funding the National Archives in Australia, UNESCO having an webinar focusing on digitization of UNESCO Constitution documents and [featured speakers from various national archives](#), explaining the “challenges and opportunities of digitisation for empowering archival communities around the globe,” and the [most recent edition of \*The Archival Spirit\*](#), a newsletter of the Religious Collections Section of the SAA. A number of SAA sections are having elections for their steering committees beginning soon, specifically the [Archival History Section](#), the [SNAP Section](#), and the [Performing Arts Section](#). I wish the best for all those running for positions and hope good people are elected that will move these SAA sections forward!

There was great news in the library world. Violet Fox, who [calls herself](#) an “expert in library metadata and classification,” [shared](#) two resolutions for the ALA Council, one on removing the “illegal aliens” term from the Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) [once and for all](#), and another focusing on [the LCSH revision process as a whole](#). Both resolutions were written by her and her colleagues Tina Gross and Jill Baron. Fox noted that while the ALA Washington Office [opposes these resolutions](#), saying the process should work more quietly behind the scenes to “prevent it becoming a political talking point,” it has been five years since the Library of Congress (LOC) committed to removing the “illegal aliens” term, so it is time to remove the term altogether and make the process for LCSH headings more transparent. Fox [requested](#) people ask her about the resolutions if they have any questions. Speaking of LOC, there were interesting posts which I read in the past week which are worth mentioning. Some focused on LOC employees [like Maurice Carter](#), head of the receiving and warehousing unit in the Logistics Services Division of Integrated Support Services, who has “kept the Library’s shipping docks open during the COVID pandemic,” a very important job, and [musician Roman Totenberg](#). Most important of all, however, was a guest post by Megan Metcalf, a Women’s Gender and LGBTQIA+ studies librarian and collection specialist at LOC, [talking about](#) the library celebrating Pride Month with an event about the library’s LGBTQ collections, which are relatively extensive,

including foundational LGBTQ publications in the 1950s and 1960s like the *Mattachine Review* (1955–66), *ONE Magazine* (1953–69) and *The Ladder* (1956–72).

I liked reading Jennifer Snoek-Brown's [examination of librarians](#) in the 1987 film, *Prick Up Your Ears*, and other assorted stories about libraries. This includes ones about [the pandemic](#), libraries [offering COVID-19 vaccinations](#), and UC Berkeley making over 10,000 Chinese-language titles available, for free, online, [in a database](#). Other than reading the depressing ALA report that aging public library infrastructure in the U.S. [will require billions of dollars to be fixed](#), it was illuminating to read [Robin Gee's post](#) on being the only out transgender (and non-binary) staff member in their library.



*The beautiful royal library in an episode of The Dragon Prince, complete with a librarian who unnecessarily shushes a patron, who turns out to be the series villain, even though the librarian obviously couldn't have known that*

Having talked about archives and libraries, I'd like to pivot toward genealogy. For one, there is the financial news that 23andMe, the DNA testing company, [is going public](#). Secondly, there were articles about remains of enslaved people in Georgetown finally [being laid to rest](#), tracing ancestry [using DNA](#), how the [1950 federal census](#) (to be available for searching next year on April 1, 2022) does not have infant cards available because infants born between January and March 1950 were not enumerated on the census because they "died before the official census day of April 1, 1950" [according to Claire Kustens](#). As such, the cards are not part of the release of the 1950 federal census because they are not part of NARA holdings and were not saved, considered to not be permanent records, but temporary instead, unfortunately. Just as valuable were stories about [source citations](#) and [a genealogist](#) who has a family tree which is exploding in its size. However, I was inspired most of all by a comment on LinkedIn [by Melissa Barker](#): "I am always telling genealogists to NOT GIVE UP! There are records being found in attics,

basements, closets and old buildings all the time. There is information being discovered in records we already have...NEVER GIVE UP!" That is something I stand by, as my genealogy research slowly moves ahead.

Just as important is news in the realm of history. As always, *Smithsonian* magazine had great articles. This included pieces on [Asian American folk heroes](#), a well-known photo studio [named Bachrach Photographers](#), unearthed footage [shedding a new light](#) on the Hindenburg disaster, an American monk traveling across the world to [safeguard documents](#) that tell "humanity's story," remains of ten Indigenous children who attended one of the first boarding schools for Indigenous students, [returning to their homes after 100 years](#), and Egyptian archaeologists accidentally discovering hundreds of ancient rock cut tombs [which date back over 4,200 years!](#) In related news, the American Historical Association released a statement which opposed "legislative efforts to restrict education about racism in American history," [covered in various media outlets](#), while writers for *Perspectives in History* covered many important topics, such as [questions of equity in remote education](#), a [clothing scrapbook](#), the [business](#) of applied history, and the experience of finding women's expressions of sufferings in [their own personal writings!](#) While the last one may make some people scratch their heads in confusion, it is vital since women didn't always write down their experiences for a variety of reasons. This has led some researchers and historians to piece together the lives of women by closely examining the words of men and official records, as something women wrote themselves is non-existent.

There are articles which don't easily fit into the categories of archives, libraries, genealogy, or history. *Smithsonian* magazine [summarized](#) a study which estimated that 50 billion wild birds live on Earth, while noting that red patches on Pluto [are mystifying scientists](#), [discussed why](#) a new statue of Marilyn Monroe is so controversial, and the return of a symbol of national identity, an ancient, pre-Inca breastplate, [returning to Peru](#). The latter reminds me of one of the season one episodes of *Carmen Sandiego*, where Carmen finds a gold coin named [Ecuadorian 8 Escudos](#), which is [a symbol](#) of the independence of Ecuador. She is able to, successfully, return the coin to an archaeologist and save a treasure for the people of the country. In other news which should surprise no one, ICE, [discussed internally](#) surveilling protests of immigrant advocates and retaliating against them for their views. On the positive side, Montpelier, the home of James Madison, in Orange County, Virginia, [voted to share power](#) with descendants of enslaved people who worked on the plantation, with the Montpelier foundation [saying this would provide a model](#) for historical sites nationwide. Hopefully, the foundation is right and other historic sites do the same, so perhaps Monticello or Mount Vernon could be next?

*The Diamondback* had an opinion piece calling for UMD [to respect its workers](#), articles about [opposition to development](#) of affordable housing in College Park for environmental reasons (although there is likely a racial component which is unsaid as a reason for opposition), and the US Education Department [extending Title IX protections](#) to transgender students. *Inside Higher Ed*, which occasionally has reactionary opinion pieces complaining about racial justice, gender justice, and the like, had pieces arguing for summer breaks [for faculty members](#), noting [tuition discount rates](#) for first-years, and [importance](#) of mask mandates. *School Library Journal* had stories about multilingual learners faced challenges [in distance learning](#). The *Chronicle of Higher Education* warned that the tenure denial of Nikole Hannah Jones, a Black female

journalist who worked on the 1619 Project along with other *New York Times* journalists, [is craven and dangerous](#)." *Medical X Press* reported on a study finding that while the origins of COVID-19 are still a mystery, [the virus was "highly human adapted."](#) As always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. Some of my favorites were about: destruction by humans to the environment [via an analogy of humans trashing planets, using plutonium to engage](#) in peaceful space exploration, and the push over and over by consumers to fulfill their desire to have new things [to make themselves happy](#). Other illustrations focused on [Tucker Carlson being](#) outed as a source for information on the former traitorous president, Fox News, and other topics, how everything is [back to normal for certain people](#) while the Earth continues to burn, [and fears](#), by certain misguided individuals, that teaching anything about racism will somehow cause their children to be "infected."

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Fourth of July edition: presidential libraries, archives, racism within the ALA, Elizabeth Packard, and more!

This week, I'll be summarizing articles, updates, and posts on libraries, archives, genealogy, and history topics, up to the "email length limit" that Gmail will truncate

*[Newsletter originally published [on July 4, 2021](#)]*



*Please don't mess with your librarians like this. This guy really can't catch a break... from The Owl House, again*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all doing well. On June 29, I published a post [reviewing](#) one of my favorite webcomics, *Diamond Dive*, and the librarian who shows up in a number of issues. On June 30, my article for *The Geekiary*, my third article on the site, [about LGBTQ representation in Final Space](#), was published. While I am a bit proud of it, the comments on Reddit were not as nice as I would [have thought they would be](#). However, that won't stop me from reviewing shows in the future. With that, let me move ahead with the rest of my newsletter.

At the end of June, Maura Porter, lead Declassification Archivist for the John F. Kennedy Library, announced her departure from the presidential library, which is part of NARA. In [an update on LinkedIn](#), she said her retirement was melancholy because, in her view, "NARA is slowly but surely turning the Presidential Libraries into shells," and lamented that many

“committed people who leave with sadness or stay disheartened,” saying it should not be this way. Taking this at face value, it seems to point to more fundamental problems with NARA itself. I can’t speak to them much since I don’t work there, but I can hope that the workplace culture changes. As I [noted on Twitter](#) on June 30 in response to Maarja Krusten’s criticism that what I said NARA and corporate language in my last newsletter was not complete, lacking in historical background, “I can only do so much in the newsletter, without it taking up too much space. I’d say what’s there is the beginning of an analysis, or part of an analysis.” The same is the case for Porter’s update. Everything in this newsletter is only a part of, or the beginning of, an analysis of a topic. I’m not trying to write a fully-fledged academic article with this newsletter, but only summarize some of the important news in specific fields and some of my own thoughts on specific topics.

Otherwise, there were stories about the Austin History Center [preserving records](#) of the pandemic’s impact of Austin with the COVID-19 files project and the publication of [ISOO’s annual report](#), saying there is a “need to rethink, update, and strengthen several of the key policies and authorities that undergird these critical information programs” (Classified National Security Information and Controlled Unclassified Information systems), among other observations. Others wrote about [the potential](#) for AI in audiovisual archives, [study](#) of British colonial identities, the importance of honoring the past while preparing for the future (in reference to [conserving a 15th century manuscript](#)), how [you can celebrate](#) July 4th with NARA, and the SAA representative to the World Intellectual Property Organization’s Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights (SCCR) William Maher [calling for “exceptions for archives.”](#) Just as relevant is [Michelle Moravec’s post](#) back in April 2016, asking how historians are thinking about “responsibilities as the users of these digitized archival material, when what we write is online, and when our reuse of digitized materials may at the least violate copyright and the worst cause harm to individuals.” That is relevant to those who digitize old materials, or relatively new ones, for archives.

That brings me to libraries. On June 29, April Hathcock, a Black female scholarly communication librarian, [announced on her blog](#) that she had completed her last session as part of the ALA Council, recounting her struggles with racism, White privilege, and other issues within the ALA itself over the past six years. She further argued that the ALA has “always been and will always be centered on promoting the ‘neutrality’ of white supremacy and capitalism,” going onto say that the ALA has not been as welcoming as it could be to those who aren’t White, which comprises 87% of the profession. She added that while she respects those fighting within the organization to making it better, she does not believe that meaningful change of the organization is going to happen, criticizing the ALA from pursuing actions which hold itself, the libraries it advocates for, or the government, accountable when it comes to inclusion and diversity, along with underpaid, furloughed, and overworked full-time staffers.

Hathcock says that while the ALA is not a place for her to make the profession more welcoming to those who are not White, noting that “bureaucratic organizations have never been sites of liberation,” that she will put her efforts toward groups such as [We Here](#), [WOC + Lib](#), [Green Book for Libraries](#), and others. The post definitely gives me a lot to think about, as a person who is new to the profession, and is a White man. As the AFL-CIO’s Department for Professional

Employees [puts it](#), “librarians are slightly less diverse than the workforce of professionals in all education, training, and library occupations,” noting in the notes that “librarians were 85.3 percent white in 2015, 84 percent white in 2010 and 88.3 percent white in 2005,” according to [U.S. Census data](#) and other [statistics](#) (see pages 3, 4, 7).

While a report by the ALA akin to the anti-racism task force just convened by NARA which I talked about [in a recent newsletter](#), with specific recommendations, would be a good first step, more needs to be done. I am not certain what needs to be done to reform the ALA, or if it can be reformed at all, but it makes sense for people of color not represented by the organization, and even discriminated against by those within the profession itself, to form their own organizations. After all, as it should be obvious, not everything can be done by going through established organizations which hold the mantle of representing specific professions.

In other news, Ipswich opened its [first dedicated public children's library](#) in Australia and the Baltimore County Library system has ended “extended loan fees...and outstanding balances on cardholders’ accounts” [in order to encourage patrons](#) with such balances on their accounts to “visit their local branch and start over with a clean slate.” Jennifer Snoek-Brown [shared perspectives](#) of the reel librarian, Wong, in Marvel films, while the Library of Congress (LOC) had posts about [Walt Whitman's diaries and notebooks](#), [how to research](#) the 1921 Tulsa massacre, and 18th century Spanish social assistance and anti-idleness policy. The latter [is from Jake Neuberger](#), a remote intern transcribing and researching documents in the Herencia: Centuries of Spanish Legal Documents crowdsourcing campaign for LOC. I also enjoyed reading Joanne Chern’s “[Seven Things I Learned in Library School](#)” post for *Hack Library School*, suggesting students do the optional readings, spend time outside your department, get involved, think beyond basics of racial diversity, recognize that those in your class may be your coworkers in the future, normalize talking about money, and follow your interests. Reading it, I found that I did everything she suggested before even reading this post! So, it was reassuring to read that post.

<https://youtu.be/Y7Wp7DS1IFk>

With that, let me talk a little about genealogy. I was so excited to see there is a new book about one of my ancestors, Elizabeth Packard (otherwise known as E.P.W. Packard), titled [The Woman They Could Not Silence!](#), which has just been published! Kate Moore, the bestselling author well known for her [book on the Radium Girls](#), [told me on Twitter](#), that she hoped I “like the book and will feel I did your ancestor proud.” I hope she is right. The book has already received positive reviews in [NPR](#), [Time magazine](#), [Publishers Weekly](#), [Smithsonian](#), [USA Today](#), and [elsewhere](#). There were also some interesting articles I found, when searching her name, about how her experience in an asylum [was not unique](#), how her life [was dramatized](#) in a recent play, *Mrs. Packard*, and, of course, my ongoing (I suppose) “Badass Elizabeth series” [on my blog](#).

Apart from this, there were posts from genealogists about [Caribbean-American heritage](#), [Black genealogy](#), Irish immigrants [settling](#) in Australia, giving life to the stories of your ancestors [without](#) replicating stereotypes in original documents, [looking forward](#) to what will happen to

your research in the future, and [the re-opening](#) of the FamilySearch Family History Library after being closed for 15 months. Most fascinating of all was [an article by Paul Chaddicks](#) about the top 10 sins of a genealogist: assuming everything online is correct, not noting every search, not going beyond birth, marriage and death records, trying to do everything yourself, adopting the scattergun approach, not checking your previous work, trying to achieve everything online, neglecting to explore, inflexibility on names, me, me, me! Some of these I have, admittedly, been guilty of, my genealogy skills are always improving.

Then we get to history. On June 2, paperback edition of Tanya Cheadle's book, *Sexual Progressives: Reimagining Intimacy in Scotland, 1880-1914* [was released](#). In the past week, there were, additionally, posts about the [life of George Westinghouse](#), and [power](#) of war, how YMCA [became a gay anthem](#). On the one hand, I read about the concern of some historians who were worrying about why the UK National Archives "[had to resort to crowdfunding](#) to protect irreplaceable historical records." On the other was April Hathcock's post about how all open scholarship is not treated equally, as it can and [does "replicate](#) some of the biases inherent in academia and our society as a whole." Then there are articles in *Smithsonian* magazine. This included articles about [fossils unearthed](#) in California waters, [a silver medieval seal](#) unearthed in England, and the story of an immigrant turned into a millionaire who dominated the gambling underground of Harlem, [named Stephanie St. Clair](#), a Black woman who "ran an illegal lottery while championing New York City's Black community," and [an interactive map](#) of gay guides that shows the evolution of local queer spaces between 1965 and 1980. This [great resource](#) is helpful for genealogists, especially for those with LGBTQ ancestors, historians studying the period, and archivists too.

There are articles which don't easily fit into the categories I have outlined so far. One of these is the controversy over the International Olympic Committee (IOC) [suspending Sha'Carri Richardson](#), a Black [queer](#) woman, for getting a positive drug test for marijuana before the official Olympic trials, [for one month](#). She apologized for this supposed "transgression" and [explained](#) it happened because she was stressed after learning her mother had died. People rightly criticized this IOC decision as [horrible](#), [horrid](#), and [unhinged](#). Some even [called for](#) abolishing the Olympic Games (and more) as the contest in and of itself obviously results in [displays of nationalism](#), or connected it to the [suspending of three women](#) for refusing to "lower their testosterone with birth control pills" and the banning of swim caps [which go over Black hair](#). The best response I saw was [someone who said](#) "competing while high should get you another medal." I agree with those sentiments and this decision is awful, [an extension of the war on drugs](#) to the world of sports. It is not surprising coming from the IOC, which hates anyone expressing themselves openly and making a political stance, and undoubtedly has institutional racism, sexism, and everything else ingrained inside the organization itself. This incident is part of ongoing hostility toward Black women and racial hypocrisy, exemplified by [the case of another Black female athlete](#), Gwen Berry, being penalized by the IOC, for not saluting for the national anthem.

It also, in terms of efforts to limit political participation by Black people, and people of color in general, is related to [the recent Supreme Court decision](#) which upholds Arizona's voter suppression laws and further eviscerates the Voting Rights Act (this time title 2), with Justices

Elena Kagan, Sonia Sotomayor, and Stephen Breyer [dissenting](#). Last but not least are illustrations from *The Nib*. This week I came across ones about the many “gurus” who can cause you [to go astray](#), [how to “relax”](#) this summer, the [incompetence](#) of police, [the California town](#) which is without running water even in the middle of a heat wave, and the continued (and probably never-ending) efforts to [deny the storming](#) of the Capitol ever happened.

That's all for this newsletter. Until next week!

- Burkely

# Traipsing through the forbidden stacks, creating inclusive archives, genealogical mystery, the drug war, and beyond!

This week, as always, there will be various stories about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and more, building upon some of the stories I talked about last week. Enjoy!

*[Newsletter originally published [on July 11, 2021](#)]*



*When your friend, a librarian, helps you on a quest to return to the human world.*

Hello everyone! I hope you had a good week. Other than having [a review of an intergalactic library](#) in an animated series published on Tuesday, I was excited to watch an episode of *The Owl House* this weekend titled “Through the Looking Glass Ruins,” which I mentioned in my [June 19](#) and [May 23](#) newsletters. A screenshot of that episode is shown above this paragraph. Even though the original description implied that the episode would be primarily about the library, and the actual episode only treated the focus on the library as one of two stories, I still loved the episode regardless. Amity and Luz travel to the “Forbidden Stacks” of the [Bonesborough Public Library](#) to find a book by a human who came to Boiling Isles before Luz ended up there by accident. By the end, Amity and Luz strengthen their bond as friends, and companions, after Luz gets Amity’s job as a librarian back. That’s all I’m going to say about that episode, without giving away too much! With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

This week, there was a lot of archives-related news. In an update related to the departure of Maura Porter from the JFK Library as the lead Declassification Archivist, which I talked about last week, is a form letter from Joe Biden [thanking her for 36 years of service](#). In a comment above the letter, Porter says that some at NARA were “secretly...thrilled” at her leaving. If that’s the case, it is terrible. On a more positive note, the [most recent issue](#) of *The American Archivist* was published earlier this week. Some of its articles highlight the limits of digitization of archival collections with occasional weak connections “between the virtual images and the physical materials they represent,” digital archives, mental health archives, and many other important topics. Moving on, there is [an upcoming meeting](#) of two SAA sections on June 12 at 2 PM Central Time (1 PM EST), the Women’s Collections Section (WCS) and Diverse Sexuality and Gender Section (DGSS). It will feature [Eirini Melena Karoutsos](#) presenting on the creating connections “through digital environments and...crossroads of access, restrictions, and queer digital spaces,” and [Jordi Padilla-Delgado](#) on approaching “aspects and points of interest about...[links] between institutional archives and community archives,” looking for LGBTQ+ memory within both. At the same time as the WCS/DGCS meeting, is [a discussion](#) of death in the archives, focusing on “literal, metaphorical, and affective presence(s) of death in the archives,” [specifically noting](#) the “complexities of access and use in archives that document death, and epistemologies of death and dying in community collections.” It will later be available on [the YouTube channel](#) of Archival Education and Research Initiative after the discussion ends, if you miss the original discussion.

On Friday, it was announced that lawmakers in Congress, specifically Pramila Jayapal of Washington and Don Young of Alaska, [were proposing a bill to amend the Federal Assets Sale and Transfer \(FASTA\) Act](#) by requiring “the federal government to consult with any federally recognized Indian tribe who might be affected by the potential sale of federal real estate,” which would [prevent the sale](#) of NARA’s Seattle facility in the future. The bill is titled “Assuring Regular Consultation to Have Indigenous Voices Effectively Solicited Act” which stands for [the ARCHIVES Act](#). Jaypal noted that if the bill passes, it will be a step toward allocating the resources for the facility, like deferred maintenance and other needed improvements. Apart from all of this, Kate Hujda, Curator of Manuscripts at the Minnesota Historical Society, [wrote about](#) rethinking on-site appraisal (i.e. archival selection), and an archivist, Dorothy Berry, [asked](#) why physical copies of information are kept if no one is allowed to see it. Another piece relevant to archives in more ways than one, is [a post by April Hathcock](#), who I talked about in my newsletter last week as resigning from the ALA because the institution, she argues, is ingrained with institutional racism. She says that while she supports openness, the “uncritical act of opening all things to all people is in and of itself an act of aggression and oppression” when it is “taking the works of the marginalized...and forcing it into (uncompensated) availability without their express consent.” This leads her to conclude that “openness is great, but like everything else, it’s only great when entered with full consent.” That opinion makes perfect sense to me and I’m not sure why anyone would disagree.

That brings me to libraries. NPR had [an interesting review](#) of a novel about the personal librarian of J.P. Morgan, titled *The Personal Librarian*. As it turns out, this story is real, and the librarian, Belle da Costa Greene, “ran the Morgan Library [for forty-three years](#)”! While she is well-known and [prominent](#), she is somewhat controversial for her decision to claim she was

Portuguese, when she was actually Black, resulting in her [choosing to be “White passing.”](#) This is when light-skinned Black people, not wanting to be discriminated against or for other reasons, live as White people. Some saw her actions as a betrayal, while others believed it was courageous. Moving on from her story, in the past week I came across Library of Congress blogs about: [the release of 30,000 bills and resolutions](#) from 1799 to 1873, the presentation of the 4th annual Summer Movies on the Lawn which are [presented on Thursday evenings](#) “at sundown between July 8 and Aug. 5 on the north lawn of the Library’s Thomas Jefferson Building,” description of [Westinghouse works](#) at the 1904 World’s Fair, and [the life](#) of George Westinghouse himself. Furthermore, the Association of Research Libraries [released a brief](#) on Section 230 of Communications Decency Act, a “1996 law that protects internet service providers and internet users from liability for content shared by third parties, and for content moderation practices,” the Law Library of Congress [recently](#) launched their improved website, [law.gov](#), and the Bloomington PD in the spotlight for a tweet [about supposed “thefts”](#) from Little Free Libraries, which doesn’t make a lick of sense! Other than Hathcock’s post about [her challenge of “the right](#) of the privileged white male to speak his mind all over the place,” there was a post by Estefania Velez, Library Information Assistant, Woodlawn Heights Library, part of the New York Public Library about [15 books to celebrate disability pride on Disability Month](#). This was wonderful as I learned about the month from this post and the book selections were diverse and fascinating enough to make you want to read each of those books listed.



*When your librarian supervisor gets annoyed with you and says you are fired. From the recent episode of The Owl House noted earlier in this post*

Just as valuable are stories on genealogy topics. Many are glad to hear about [the re-opening of the Family History Library](#) run by FamilySearch in Utah which closed in March 2020 due to the pandemic. It has been remodeled and changed, with a phased re-opening which began on July 6 with limited hours, then hours expanding from the existing hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. I was

excited to learn that new records were added online to the database of [the Official Historical Archive of Parma](#) as many of my ancestors, the Baccarinis, Lanfranchis, Bevilacquas, and many others, lived in Northern Italy. Additionally, some talked about [Black genealogy](#) and asked what [bankruptcy records](#) can tell us, while Jennifer Mendelsohn wrote a perspective in *Washington Post* about “records from [before the Nazis are easier](#) to find than many people realize,” and MEAWW noted how the complex lineage of Vanessa Williams “[sparked a million Google searches](#).” Most valuable of all was a post by a White female genealogist named Beth Wylie back in August 2017 [on “the complexities](#) of having slave owning ancestors.” She noted, rightly, that a “false narrative has been created to intentionally cover up our most shameful moments and to romanticize a history that never really occurred,” adding that people should delve deeper into slavery, exposing the roles of our ancestors in this institution, not putting them up on pedestals, but “recognize they were flawed humans.” This is a vital post for genealogists.

With that, let’s talk about history. As always, I enjoyed various articles in *Smithsonian* magazine about various topics, such as: [possible changes](#) to a gathering place in the state of Georgia of the KKK (Stone Mountain Park), an [examination](#) of how bad Nero was as a Roman ruler, [the discovery](#) of an old Vincent Van Gogh painting, the [ancient history](#) of eating kosher, and an Ancient Roman bath complex [unearthed](#) at a Spanish beach. The same can be said about articles in the *Journal of the American Revolution* focusing on: [William Babcock and his inaccurate pension application](#) and the Stockbridge Indian ambassadors’ dangerous peace mission to Canada [in 1775](#), at the start of the Revolutionary War. I liked reading about artifacts [from New Acadia](#) in the 1600s and 1700s being unearthed, the [history behind](#) the 1781 painting “Thaïs of Athens with Torch” by Joshua Reynolds, and Sophie Michell, a death and crime historian, [looking for information](#) about the Ampthill workhouse riot in May 1835 in England. While there was an effort to draw [hope](#) from the Women Writing History Project, some [are attempting](#) to ban LGBTQ history in schools. In the latter case, the American Historical Association [opposes any efforts](#) to “restrict the teaching of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history in elementary, middle, and high schools.” They have also [called for “increased funding](#) for the US Department of Education’s international and foreign language education programs.”

Finally, there are articles on topics which don’t neatly fit into existing categories of this newsletter but are still worth mentioning, nonetheless. The story of the suspension of Sha’Carri Richardson which I talked about in last week’s newsletter for smoking marijuana before a qualifying race continues. In response to her suspension, [Biden coldly declared](#) “the rules are the rules and everybody knows what the rules were going in. Whether they should remain the rules is a different issue, but the rules are the rules.” This unsympathetic statement puts her at odds with those who said she should compete. Despite this, there is news that the White House is [reportedly pushing](#) the World Anti-Doping Agency to loosen “restrictions on the use of cannabis by athletes” while over 500,000 have signed a petition asking for Richardson to be reinstated to the US Olympic team, echoed by the Marijuana Policy Project and others. Meanwhile, Richardson has said she knows what she did, what she is “supposed to do and am allowed not to do, and I still made that decision,” adding “I’m not making an excuse. I’m not looking for any empathy in my case.” In unrelated news, [some criticized](#) the plateauing of vaccination rates in the U.S. with some wrongly believing the pandemic is over (it isn’t) and

aren't paying attention anymore, noted [the repatriation](#) of over 1,300 cultural artifacts to Costa Rica, [the removal](#) of Confederate statues from the U.S. Capitol (and recently the Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville), and the announcement that the remaining fence around the U.S. Capitol will be removed [in the coming days](#). Some pointed out [the unveiling](#) of Chicago's first monument to a Black woman (Ida B. Wells) and one person asking whether COVID-19 [will disappear from public view](#) like HIV/AIDS. In the case of the latter, I doubt it will be ignored and not talked about in public discourse, especially with the growing number of people refusing to take the vaccine, even though it is to their own peril.

Then there's [Hathcock's post](#) about the fears "white people have about screwing up when getting involved in race work" (i.e. anti-racist action). She argues that White people will screw up at some point, deserving the hurt, frustration, and anger of people of color toward them. She goes on to say that those who do this antiracist work will learn from their mistakes, experience fulfillment and joy in this work, but that this work is "not for the faint of heart," as you will have the "comfy warmth of your white privilege and ignorance stripped away and laid bare." A post worth revisiting, for sure, even though it was written in April 2016, over five years ago.

Last but not least are illustrations from *The Nib* about an Exxon lobbyist saying they have [11 Senators in their pocket](#), the [problematic "game truck](#)" operated by the NYPD which will likely keep your fingerprints in a hidden police database, and [the disturbing decision](#) by the U.S. Supreme Court [in Mast v. Fillmore](#) to allow an Amish community who claimed that septic systems violate their beliefs! This decision builds upon the recent ruling justices [made in Fulton v. Philadelphia](#) that backed the right of a Catholic foster agency to reject LGBTQ+ adoptees as a violation of their religious beliefs. What I noted [in my June 19 newsletter](#) is still relevant, in that this case further strengthens the so-called "religious freedom" rights of religious institutions to be honored by government entities in the years ahead, which is troubling, to say the least.

No one should be applauding this decision. Rather, any reasonable person should be worried about the growing legal power of religious entities in this country, which is nothing new. [In 2012](#), the court ruled that the selection of religious leaders by religious organizations is not bound by federal anti-discrimination laws. [Two years later](#), the court ruled that privately held for-profit religious corporations are exempt from regulations their owners object to, in the infamous Hobby Lobby case. [In 2017](#), the court required a state to, in the words of Justice Sonia Sotomayor, "directly fund a religious organization in a manner that assisted the spread of its religious message and views." [In 2018](#), the court narrowly decided that an anti-discrimination order from the Colorado Civil Rights Commission against a Colorado baker who refused to make a cake for a gay couple was unconstitutional. In 2020, the court had a rash of decisions, whether [preventing state scholarships](#) for private schools to discriminate against such schools, giving religious organizations the power to dismiss employees for various reasons in the [words of the dissenting justices](#), allowing said organizations to [opt out of the mandate](#) in the Affordable Care Act for birth control for so-called "religious" or "moral" reasons, and stating that litigants can, at times, [obtain monetary damages](#) against federal officials if they violate the Religious Freedom Restoration Act. All of these is not outweighed by [the dismissal](#) of the lawsuit from Arlene's Flowers, "a florist who wouldn't furnish flowers for a same-sex wedding." What is mentioned

above is, obviously, not all the cases out there, but is some of the ones that have expanded said rights.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Nuclear bombs, archives in pop culture, libraries under stress, genealogy, and more!

This week, I'll be talking about, as always, archives, libraries, genealogy, and history, along with some thoughts on what is going on in Cuba and Haiti, and other topics.

*[Newsletter originally published [on July 18, 2021](#)]*



*Ansi enters the secret library in the first episode of Welcome to the Wayne. I had to edit this image a bit, so that's why some parts of it appear smudged.*

Good evening everyone! I hope you all had a good week. On Tuesday, I published a [review of a public library](#) in an animated series I like. This week I have been slowly working on a post about my ancestor, Samuel Packard, a Rhode Islander who participated in the transatlantic slave trade in the 1790s even though it was illegal. Hopefully, I'll publish that post in the coming week, meaning it will be in next week's newsletter. My friend tells me that they are working on a new fictional work, which may be published tomorrow. With that, let me get on with the rest of my newsletter.

There was a lot of archives-related news this week. For one, William Burr, one of my colleagues at the National Security Archive, [edited a post](#) focusing on how concerns about future U.S. reliability influenced the British quest for Trident missiles in the 1970s and 1980s, in an attempt

to improve their capability to “bomb Soviet targets, including major cities, without having to depend on the United States.” This post was informed by records within the Digital National Security Archive (which I index records for), the Nixon Presidential Library, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library, Jimmy Carter Presidential Library, CIA FOIA database, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, the National Archives in the UK, and a State Department FOIA release. So that’s cool. Samantha “Sam” Cross, a premier pop culture reviewer in the archives field, has a new article where she, [in her words](#), “over-analyzes an issue of *X-Men and the Micronauts* that features a character called The Archivist.” Cross first gives some background of comics in the 1980s and notes the problematic parts of the story (which would make anyone cringe). The character known as “The Archivist” stands on “the corner, observe[s] the atrocities, and transmit[s] them to Karza’s headquarters”! Yikes! He stays alive and aware until he dies in an explosion. Unfortunately, this archivist isn’t really an archivist. Recording and seeing something doesn’t make you an archivist, you have to curate or preserve something, giving context to observations to those who will view the records in the future. She was also annoyed that this so-called archivist sat on the sidelines and did nothing while the villain attacked the heroes. She rightly criticized those who “honestly believe that Archivists *should* just be agents of neutrality.” The problem is that neutrality is a choice. She noted that it should be “the job of the archivist to advocate and fight for inclusion” because when that doesn’t happen, “the more biased the records become, which typically favors one group...over another.” This connects to a [recent Twitter thread by Cross](#) where she talked about an article she is writing on “invisibility of archives and archivists,” relating it to the company she works for and pop culture itself. I really look forward to reading that!

Otherwise, there was news that the Nelson Mandela Foundation [acquired the Jakes Gerwel Archive](#), with Gerwel as the “Director-General in the office of President Nelson Mandela, and as Mandela’s Cabinet Secretary” and [an announcement](#) by the SAA’s Committee of Public Awareness of their Open House on Thursday, July 22nd, 3:30-4:30 pm CST, which will give more information about the committee, allowing people to ask questions and meet committee members. On July 16, [NARA announced limited reopening](#) of research rooms, with “research visits...by appointment only...[with boxes of records will be pulled in advance...[and] research appointments will initially be for 4-5 hours total,” with a number of measures to “ensure the safety of our researchers and staff.” On July 26, the Archival History Section [will hold its annual meeting via Zoom](#) at 11:00 am-12:30 pm CT (beginning 12:00 pm EST, 10:00 am MT, 9:00 am PT). I enjoyed reading about something which has kept the staff of the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies “connected, supported, engaged...throughout the pandemic”: [a project organized around a Twin Cities public access television show, named GAZE-TV](#). While the over 230 videos had been digitized and made available, they were only “described in only very rudimentary ways,” so efforts were made to describe the contents of each episode, with the collection valuable to all sorts of people, including those within the LGBTQ community. I also [learned](#) this week that the new Maryland state archivist, Elaine Rice Bachmann, previously deputy state archivist, will take the place of Tim Baker, state archivist since July 2015. She took her position as state archivist [on July 1](#) and will also be [the commissioner of land patents](#).

That brings me to libraries. I was excited to see a recent episode of *Mira, Royal Detective* centered around a bake sale trying to raise money for a mobile library (literally a library on wheels) to buy more materials which the public could use. In other pop culture news, Jennifer Snoek-Brown [had a fascinating review](#) on her *Reel Librarians* blog of John Lahr's 1978 biography, *Prick Up Your Ears*. I'd definitely recommend it as something to read. Although the death threats [forcing a trans magician](#) to cancel her library shows are terrible, even worse is a story in *Truthout* about how "right-wing groups are [trying to stop public and school libraries](#) from promoting racial justice and queer acceptance." It is another attempt by these reactionary forces to control what people can find out about the past, present, and future, restricting what people can find to what suits to their narrow, and bigoted, mindset. The story itself is chilling. It shows the challenge ahead in trying to fight such reactionary forces in our society, whether by electing people to library boards or mobilizing support of the community. These reactionary forces are trying to cut back services and take them over to achieve their own ends. This is not unique. Libraries, as pointed out in the article, were under pressure during the Cold War, with some claiming they were spreading "communist propaganda," even though they obviously weren't. While engaging in this fight, one should take into account what April Hathcock, who I've mentioned in the past couple of weeks in this newsletter, [wrote about in 2016](#). Everything we do has "emotional and physical and intellectual components," as she puts it, and all of it is labor, even if it's something we love doing. She says this should be recognized as work and that you should be paid for it. I agree with that completely. It makes sense to pay someone for all their labor and for that pay to be fair.

More promising is the stories of [librarians stopping thieves](#), how libraries [are a popular attraction, the patrons](#) who place library holds but don't pick them up, and the 2021 title for Librarians and Archivists with Palestine's [international reading campaign, One Book, Many Communities](#): a two part story titled *Minor Detail* by Adania Shibli. Their campaign draws inspiration for "people in local communities come together to read and discuss a common book." I liked reading about [library learning analytics](#), an [upcoming webinar](#) (on July 21) from the Library of Congress on COVID-19 and our environment, and the presidential papers of 23 presidents, from [George Washington to Calvin Coolidge](#), are now all [online and digitized](#). This is after the work of many staff and volunteers since the 1990s, which has been described as a "godsend in an era of shrinking academic research budgets and dwindling travel funds." All the papers on presidents from Hoover onward are under the custody of the National Archives and Records Administration, within specific presidential libraries.



A clone soldier tells citizens of Rylloth to have their “chain codes out and ready” in a recent episode of *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*

That brings me to genealogy. There were [more articles](#) about the [recent book](#) on Elizabeth Packard (*The Woman They Could Not Silence*) which I talked about last week. More than that, I loved the continual integration of chain codes into the story of *Star Wars: The Bad Batch*, and the strange mention in [a review of a Star Wars film](#) of ancestry, declaring: “...from a dramatic perspective, you’re working against yourself if you argue that all of your character’s personal experiences are minimized by a discovery on Ancestry.com.” Not really sure what to make of that. There were articles about indigenous communities [fighting questionable ancestry claims](#), the “[pandora’s box](#)” of [DNA testing, tips](#) for family research (including remembering that FamilySearch does not index [many of their records](#)), and the [continued](#) popularity of genealogy during the pandemic. It was inspiring to read how an ancestral discovery [inspired an Oklahoman woman](#) to not stay silent about racial inequities. Also, an article in *Adval* showed the power of Ancestry. In this case, [a Turkish group was boycotting the company](#) after “results on the website highlighted how non-Turkish groups in Anatolia assimilated over time into modern Turks,” claiming Turkey is being demonized. While this nationalist viewpoint is pure garbage, it makes clear that Ancestry has a privileged position as a company that many use, giving it an ability, unlike others, to influence public perceptions.

Then, we get to history. I had to laugh at the story of [a Shrewsbury house filled with concrete foam](#) to save it from collapse. Of course, there were assorted articles about the brief surfacing of [a medieval Italian village](#), the [anniversary](#) of Bastille Day (on July 14), [how](#) 420-million-year-old fish might have emerged in Madagascar, researchers uncovering [traces of a medieval Scottish town](#) that had been razed, and [the role](#) of the American Red Cross in the Tulsa Massacre of 1921. Even more important than those stories, and those on [documenting the iconic Claiborne Avenue](#) in New Orleans, [following](#) the footsteps of botanist John Bartram who explored Florida in the 1770s, or how the North Carolina governor, Thomas Burke, [was captured](#) in 1781, were two items. The first was [a dramatic victory](#) for the Yakama Nation, “affirming the reservation status of 121,465 acres within the southwestern corner of the Yakama

Reservation, including Mt. Adams and the Glenwood Valley.” Second is Illinois [becoming the first state](#) to mandate that Asian-American history be taught in schools!

There are a number of stories which don’t fall into the other categories of this newsletter. There is a lot of talk about the protests in Cuba. The reactionary Cuban exile community in Florida grumble about Cuba all the time, represented by people such as Marco Rubio, and are demanding U.S. intervention whenever they can. The Biden Administration, on the other hand, along with various politicians, [media outlets](#), and public personalities, are declaring their solidarity with the people supposedly fighting for “freedom” on the island. Others claim that both sides (Cuba and the U.S.) are to blame. All these perspectives are wrongheaded. None of them recognize [current U.S. plans to meddle](#) in the island’s affairs, past U.S. history of extensive intervention over and over again, primarily in the 20th, and now 21st, century. The fact is that [removing](#) the embargo and lifting travel / migration restrictions, which the big businesses and their lobbies want to disappear, would promote “freedom” which will never be gained from sanctioning the island’s population to death. Whether you agree with [Cuba’s socialist model](#) or not, they should solve their own problems without interference from the United States.

Undoubtedly, the country is under a lot of economic strain due to the embargo and pandemic-related economic contraction, meaning that the protests are understandable. However, supporting them while screaming that the country is a “dictatorship,” or some silliness like that, is never going to accomplish anything. Instead, it will make you look like a fool. Furthermore, with all the problems within the U.S., the long and disturbing history of worldwide interventions, the U.S. government has no moral authority to dictate how other countries should treat their populations. It’s that simple.

Speaking of [U.S. intervention](#) in Latin America, there seems to be some indications of possible involvement in the death of President Jovenel Moïse in Haiti, leading former Bolivian leader Evo Morales to call it [part of “a new US Plan Condor.”](#) referring to what [my colleagues at the NSA](#) describe as “a cross-border conspiracy of dictatorships in the 1970s and 1980s to “eradicate ‘subversion.’” News outlets have reported that some of those who assassinated him [had received](#) U.S. military training in the past, FBI agents [assisting](#) in investigation of the assassination, and one of those arrested, in connection with the assassination, [previously working as a DEA informant!](#) This is something that organizations should request documents for, through the relevant agencies. With that, I loved [this illustration](#) about the topic.

The *Columbia Journalism Review* had an article about the [never-ending issue](#) of link rot (i.e. external links become dead when “the linked web pages or complete websites disappear, change their content, or move without HTML redirection,” as [described by Wikipedia](#)) in *New York Times* articles from 1996-2019. The *Washington Post* described, on June 28, how workers in the U.S. [are exhausted and burned out](#), with some companies beginning to notice. On July 9, *CNN* had an opinion piece on the story of one White woman [publicly declaring she cares diversity](#) when she is actually racist, and how this is true on a much broader scale. Some time ago, Ashley Dawson wrote about [the movement to push museums](#) to end their ties with Israel, which is occupying the West Bank and Gaza with an iron fist. Others said that academics [should become](#) more involved in the struggle for open access.

In a disconcerting note, tourism in Hawaii [has picked up](#) after travel restrictions have been loosened. Native Hawaiians are urging tourists to not visit the islands until they are safe, with brewing anger at tourists unequally squandering resources and how the economy of the islands is based on tourism. In closing, there were wonderful illustrations in *The Nib*, as always. They focused on an [anti-Jewish supporter](#) of the former president, [the weakness](#) of "sensible" liberals, how cities should design [roads for people](#), not cars, letters by various people [affected](#) by the pandemic, the obvious problem with guns [in the U.S.](#), the association of the GOP [with the Confederacy](#), Justice Samuel Alito getting his comeuppance [for ruling in favor](#) of Arizona's restrictive voting laws, and full-time minimum wage workers not able to afford rent [anywhere](#) within the U.S. All are disconcerting, but illustrations are a good form of expressing these ideas.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Libraries, fiction, genealogy, archivists in popular culture, history, and so on

This week, I'll be writing about archives, libraries, genealogy, and history, along with a focus on my friend's new fictional work, a slave trading ancestor, and many other topics.

[Newsletter originally published [on July 25, 2021](#)]



*The wonders of the Privy Library via [/r/libraries](#). This looks more like a book depository, which is often the image of libraries portrayed in pop culture*

Hello everyone! I hope your week is going well. In the past week, I published a post about [wonderful scenes](#) of libraries in animation and webcomics. My friend [wrote a fictional work](#) that has a huge focus on a lot of family history and genealogy, especially at the beginning, before it gets moving onto the rest of the story. I'm really excited that their work is moving forward!

Speaking of genealogy, I published a post today which looks at [one of my ancestors from Rhode Island who participated in the transatlantic slave trade](#), as a slave trader, even though his action was wholly illegal. Already, the post has been praised by fellow genealogists on Twitter for having “[great information](#)” (Carolynn ni Lochlainn) and providing “[incredible detail and research](#)” (Beth Wylie). Wylie also said that the post [made their day](#) since she writes and researches so little these days, and [hoped](#) that “more white people were familiar with their own histories & comfortable discussing their ancestors roles in the oppression of other groups,” saying it would help a lot in “our current National issues.” I’ll agree with that. You can see my responses to Lochlainn and Wylie [on my Twitter account](#). With that, let me begin my newsletter.

In the world of archives, Colleen Theisen, a MLIS program lecturer who was formerly a Special Collections librarian, [mentioned a film](#) named *The Last Letter From Your Lover* which is based around a journalist stumbling “across love letters dating back to the 1960s while doing research in the newspaper’s archives.” She is helped by an archivist, with a love story which, of course, “begins to unfold between the journalist and the endearing archivist the more letters they read together,” [according to Forbes](#). So, that’s cool, even if it is replete with stereotypes (which it undoubtedly is). It reminds me a bit of *Somewhere in Time*, where Christopher Reeve reads about a mysterious woman he meets and he tries to travel back in time to 1912, using old records to help him in this endeavor. Anyway, Samantha “Sam” Cross, who I have mentioned in this newsletter time and again, [reviewed archives within a video game](#), *The Hollow Knight*. She noted a part where a player takes on the role of an archivist, even though the archives are in name only. She talked about the value of an archivist “represented by a jellyfish type creature” as they represent “something unknowable and alien, which makes them the perfect conduits for knowledge keepers” in the game itself.

Other than this, there were stories about a NARA grant [funding digitization](#) of Pittsburgh records, [NARA's virtual programs](#) in their Virtual Programs Newsletter, and the SAA’s 2021 Nominating Committee asking for help in identifying potential candidates for the Vice President/President-Elect (2022-2024), Council Member (2022-2025), and Nominating Committee (2023) positions. Additionally, the story about how a music library on Spotify [will disappear if Spotify itself dies](#), was interesting and terrifying at the same time. Otherwise, the Web Archiving section of the SAA [outlined lessons](#) from pandemic web archiving, Gina Kim Perry, an archives specialist at NARA in D.C., noted [the importance](#) of the ratified Indian Treaties Digitization Project, [as did Dong Eun Kim](#), an exhibits conservator. I also liked reading about a new exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum [which shows the power of records](#), and the Los Angeles Archivists Collective [describing](#) the true cost of archival acquisitions. The College & University Archives section of the SAA announced [the results](#) from recent elections, and the New Zealand Micrographic Services outlined why digitization [is important](#), although they don’t focus much on the costs of such digitization.

That brings me to libraries. There was a lot of news from the Library of Congress this week. Some posts focused on the [role of online interns](#), [preserving special books](#), and [a return](#) to in-person reference services. Others included interviews with two interns who worked on transcribing the *Herencia: Centuries of Spanish Legal Documents* collection for the Law Library of Congress: [Nina Perdomo](#) and [Gabby Farina](#). In related library news, 600,000 books being

culled from the National Library of New Zealand's collection will be digitized by a not-for-profit digital library, the Internet Archive. While [the article](#) says IA "saved" these books, the fact is that they were being culled for a simple reason: they were overseas publications generally published between 1965 and 1969 and "rarely accessed." That seems like a more justified reason than any in weeding the books, as that these publications will be removed to "make room for more New Zealand, Māori and Pasifika content." Libraries are not storehouses of information that need to keep everything they ingest, unlike archives, which have stricter records retention measures, with many of the records kept permanently. Nothing in a library is required to be there permanently.

Just as valuable were articles about the Indianapolis Public Library leadership [accused of racism](#), a post by Laura Solomon reminding librarians [to not pretend](#) they are patrons of a library website, and a post from April Hathcock. In the latter case, [Hathcock noted](#) that sociopolitical context is important to recognize as it affects us all, saying that there is no such thing as library neutrality because we "live in a system of oppression," which is not accidental, going "beyond individual motivations and good intentions," and says that some folks fail to "realize the broader contextual implications of what they're asking for, saying, doing." She concludes by saying we should all "do the world a favor and take a step back to observe the context around us...be mindful of how that context rests on the lives of others" and do our work from such a "place of mindfulness." That is something I can agree with completely.

With that, we move onto genealogy. China's Genebox was [said to be a "breakthrough](#)" in DNA testing [at home](#), while others [pointed to](#) investigative genetic genealogy being used to solve a double murder and, in the case of *Olive Tree Genealogy*, [focused on](#) finding naturalization papers for an ancestor. Judy G. Russell of *The Legal Genealogist*, [had a post](#) about the switchover from pounds and pence to dollars and cents, with pounds used as currency by some well into the 19th century, since the U.S. "didn't have anything remotely resembling a national banking system that could push the general economy into the new currency system." *Midwest Computer Genealogists* had a post [about two Missouri pioneers](#) and *SFGate* pointed out that [Ancestry.com had begun](#) subleasing its 9 million square foot space in San Francisco.

There is some news in the world of history. *Perspectives and History* reviewed history lessons that can come [from Judas and the Black Messiah](#), and [told the story](#) of Buck Colbert Franklin and the Tulsa Massacre. In addition, *Smithsonian* magazine examined [what archaeology can tell us](#) about the ancient history of eating kosher and a trove of Viking-age treasures making [their public debut](#). Alison J. Miller, Asian Art History Assistant Professor, examined, in *Nursing Clio*, medicine and modern girls [in 1930s Japanese painting](#), while articles in the *Journal of the American Revolution* focused on two topics: George Washington's [Culper Spy Ring](#) and [Caroline Howe celebrating](#) the Glory of the First of June, 1794. Furthermore, Jacques Gagné wrote in *Genealogy Ensemble* [about the tragic cholera epidemic](#) of 1832 in lower Canada.

That brings me to other articles which don't fit into the existing categories of this newsletter. The *Washington Post* reported on the terrifying, but at all surprising, use of [private spy software sold by an Israeli firm](#) found on cellphones worldwide, while *Smithsonian* magazine, for their part, argued that the controversy over a Black actress playing Anne Boleyn [is unnecessary](#) and

harmful, [KPBS reported](#) on the unveiling of a Say Your Names memorial by the San Diego African American Museum of Fine Art, and the World Health Organization [certified China](#) as malaria-free earlier this month.

*The Nib* had a number of wonderful illustrations. They were on various subjects. This included, for instance, how anti-vaxxers [shame autistic kids, post-quarantine edition](#) of awkward hugs, [the wackiness](#) of those who believe in the lies peddled by the former president, unvaccinated Americans [being the ones](#) who worry the least about the Delta variant, and Israel declaring that Ben & Jerry's [will suffer](#) "severe consequences" over the boycott of occupied Palestine, even though the company has "[conducted business in Israel](#) with a licensee partner since 1987."

The official statement is more weaselly than you would think: Ben & Jerry's ice cream [won't be sold in occupied Palestine after the end of this year](#), but they will STILL "stay in Israel through a different arrangement." So, I guess this is a victory, but a hollow one at best. Other illustrations focused on [efforts to ensure](#) conservative power, how [nothing is returning to normal](#), Republicans being divided [on how much to push vaccines](#), and the problematic statistic that [almost a quarter](#) of LAPD officers fail to promptly activate body cameras in incidents where they use force! This is only a sampling of the probably 30-40 illustrations they send out each week, which cover a gamut of topics.

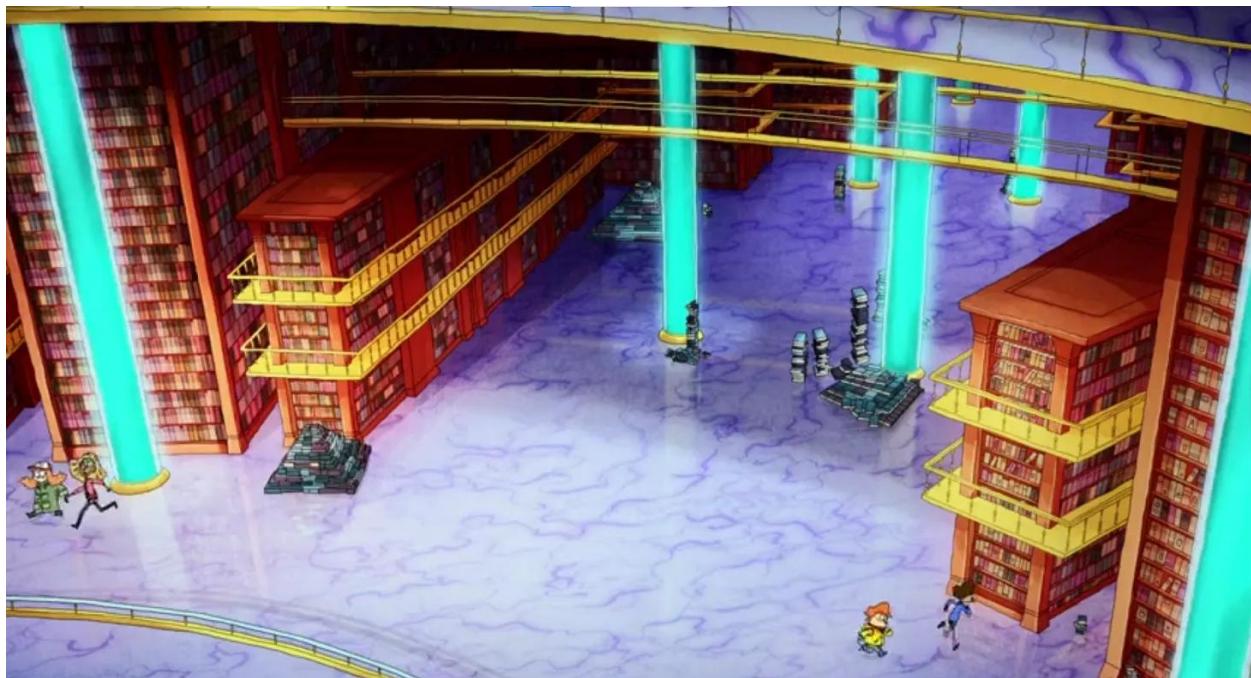
That's all for this week. Until next time!

- Burkely

# Pop culture reviews, archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and blogs on hiatus

This week I'll be writing about the same topics as always, with a focus on archives-related stories, interns at the Library of Congress, and more.

*[Newsletter originally published [on August 1, 2021](#)]*



*The expanse of the secret library in an episode of Welcome to the Wayne*

Good evening everyone! I hope you all had a productive week. On Tuesday, I published a post examining a [washed-up rock star/librarian in \*Phineas and Ferb\*](#), named Swampy, one of my favorite animated series, noting how Swampy fulfills the librarian as failure stereotype. On Wednesday, I examined a so-called “archival reserve” in the webcomic *Meau*, noting how libraries and archives are sadly, and unfortunately, [confused yet again](#) in this comic. And, on Friday, I put my blog reviewing genealogy and family history in pop culture [on hiatus](#). While I could review something like [this](#), to give an example, my luck seems to have run out when it comes to finding family history and genealogy themes in pop culture. In the coming weeks, I'll be putting other blogs on hiatus as well, so I can refocus my efforts, so I'm not stretching my time and resources too thin. With that, let me begin this newsletter.

There is surprisingly a lot of news about archives this week, more than I usually come across. For one, the Archives of the COVID Tracking Project at *The Atlantic* [donated their records](#) to UCSF, a Cinematec storage facility in São Paulo, Brazil, preserving films from Brazil's cinema, [caught fire](#), damaging (and destroying) many priceless films permanently. Some blamed budget

cuts and negligence by the country's government as a reason for the fire. The latter is because Bolsonaro, a fascist in a suit, dismantled the country's Ministry of Culture two years ago, stopped paying the staff of Cinematec, and ended the contract with a foundation which oversaw Cinematec. As a result, these actions led to "a lapse in care for the large film archive." On July 27, [NARA announced](#) that due to the rise of COVID-19 cases in Missouri, the Truman Presidential Library is closing and will only re-open if health conditions improve. One day before, David Ferriero, the head of NARA, [wrote about](#) how the Federal Records Center in Colorado sits on indigenous land, specifically the Cheyenne and Arapaho nations, continuing a series of posts noting the indigenous land that NARA buildings sit on. In the past week, [lawmakers called for](#) the backlog of about "500,000 unprocessed veteran requests for records at the National Personnel Records Center" to be cleared by NARA and there were sessions about awareness, advocacy, and outreach [for specific SAA sections](#). Additionally, the [July/August edition](#) of *Archival Outlook* was released. It includes articles on transcribing Spanish-language letters, custodial partnerships, archival accessioning, retaining archivists who have disabilities, and many other important topics. It was also interesting to read about [the gaps](#) in oral histories, the limits of PDFs as [ways to send records](#) through email, classified UK Ministry of Defense documents found at a bus stop, [of all places](#), and comments [from a fellow archivist](#) reminding patrons to not be rude to those "doing their jobs & from whom you need something." The pandemic is not an excuse to be rude to workers.

That brings me to libraries. There were posts about: people [trying to stop](#) defunding of the Niles-Maine District Library and [the value](#) of school librarians. One librarian even [questioned](#) whether the ALA will begin fully investing "in fighting racism and supporting librarians of color." Realistically, this will not happen unless ALA members push for it. The ALA serves those who are the majority of the profession: White female librarians. That is clear without a doubt. Others rightly argued, [among other points](#), that "grad school work experiences & internships...always self-select for privilege," and Jennifer Snoek-Brown wrote [yet another review](#). She asked whether a reel librarian, played by Benedict Wong, will return in the film *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, and it seems that he will. So, that's cool.

Best of all, the Library of Congress had all sorts of posts this week. Some focused on mundane things like [bill alerts](#) or [summer reading projects](#), while others interviewed interns! This included Samantha Mendoza who is working [on transcribing](#) Spanish legal documents, [Sarah Lundy](#) who is working in the Preservation Services Division, and others, like Arnold Bhebhe working on [preservation science](#), Darshai Hollie [helping conserve](#) documents, and Cienna Benn working on [the papers](#) of a distinguished Black female opera and concert soprano named Jessye Norman. Last but not least is a post by April Hathcock who I have talked about before. She talks about, in a [post from 2016](#), the power of naming, and noting that even changes by the Library of Congress to use terms like "noncitizen" and "unauthorized immigration" is still problematic. She further notes that the established order tries to "reconstruct the way we name, organize, and identify ourselves," with the power to name being something that those "with privilege are always hard-pressed to cede." She then noted that those on the margins continue to rebel, resist, and fight that, insisting on their own names, trying to, as she puts it, "wrest that power away from those who would deny us." Once again, a solid post and argument from Hathcock, as always.

Now, let me talk a little about genealogy. Last week, when [my post about my slave-trading ancestor](#) was published, I received a flurry of comments on Twitter, even more than I expected. One person I didn't mention in last week's newsletter was Charles C. Andrews, a bibliophile and genealogist. [He said](#) that he enjoyed the post because he worked in the ocean trade for many years, noting he worked with a colleague whose ancestor was the captain of a Rhode Island captain who carried enslaved people. He added that shippers [still "do](#) a cost-profit analysis...and pay a fine" to disregard the law, if they can still make a profit. I just thought I'd share that before moving on with the rest of my newsletter.

Again, there was [yet another review](#) of that new book about Elizabeth Packard, *The Woman They Could Not Silence*. Other than this, some wrote about [using FamilySearch resources effectively](#), how indigenous people [had to be granted](#) the right to citizenship even though they were born in the U.S. (pretty messed up if you think about it), [online historical newspaper collections](#), and [using FamilySearch trees](#). The same could be said about a post highlighting differences between a vital record [and headstone](#), another [noting](#) how far ancestors moved, and a final one [answering](#) how Ancestry's API adds in hints for incorrect facts. Finally, there's a post about young Irish women [emigrating "independently](#) without the support of a husband or brother," starting in the 19th century, allowing them to make their own decisions. One of those Irish women may have been my ancestor, Margaret Bibby, if she came on her own from Ireland.

Then, there are articles about history. One of these noted [the problems](#) with saying the storming of the Capitol makes the U.S. "like a banana republic," as that term is being used without historical context. In sum, the term only makes sense, historically, when applied to U.S. intervention in Latin America. Another article explained [what people should do with captured Nazi flags](#), saying it depends on the context of the flag, and noting that no matter what you do with a flag, anything is better than raising it on a flag pole. In an analysis piece earlier this week by historian Thomas Blake Earle, he explains how U.S. imperialism [made surfing into an Olympic sport](#). Now, while I found [the letter](#) from the American Historical Association on COVID-19 vaccination rates in Louisiana and Cliveden reenactments [reconsidering](#) use of weapons in light of gun violence, it is far [more important](#) to note that the Americans with Disabilities Act is entering its fourth decade!

Otherwise, *Smithsonian* magazine had articles on many topics. This includes researchers [uncovering](#) the origins of watermelons, [introducing](#) a Galapagos tortoise which has been lost for over a century, [photos](#) from the first pride marches, [uneartthing](#) of a grave containing over 40 enslaved people at a 18th-century plantation on the Caribbean island of Sint Eustatius, how climate change [may have driven](#) war in Sudan over 13,000 years ago, and summary of [the history](#) of beaches going from something feared to a "place of respite and vacation," with beaches under threat, having meaning, not being something that is blank and lifeless.

There are a few topics which don't fit within the above paragraphs of this newsletter, which are loosely organized by subject (archives, libraries, genealogy, and history). April Hathcock [noted in 2016](#) that if you are a person with privilege and you'd like to learn, then look it up, with the hard part being, first "...doing something about what you learn," and secondly "making real change in the way you relate to marginalized people in your world." That includes, in her view,

being a good ally, give marginalized folks a break, educating fellow privileged people, explaining the basics, remembering that marginalized people aren't here for "our education or edification." The latter is especially something that some people tend to forget.

On a different subject, connecting to what I said in my July 18 newsletter about Cuba, is that the Cold War is over. In any case, reading about how American athletes, like Simon Biles, [are praising Russian athletes](#), and vice versa, is great to see. Anyway, *Smithsonian* magazine had a number of fascinating articles on [a journey](#) to the northernmost tree in Alaska, [softer side of sabercats, observing](#) moths, and how to watch the Perseids meteor shower, an event which will peak, according to [the article](#), between August 11 and August 13. So, get out your telescopes, binoculars, and phones, people! On a worrisome note, the UN's World Meteorological Organization [released a report](#) showing the acceleration of climate change, while the Rijksmuseum has a new exhibit [confronting](#) the role of the Netherlands in the transatlantic slave trade. In fact, during the so-called "Dutch Golden Age" in the 1600s, as the article notes, "many of the republic's wealthiest residents made their fortunes through the enslavement, sale and exploitation of African people." None of this should surprise anyone.

While I could go more into depth about [critical race theory](#), the audiobook industry [squirming through](#) a "cultural debate on representation and casting," and correcting a mistake in a children's book with a trans female protagonist by [using a sharpie](#), I'd rather focus on illustrations from *The Nib*. This includes [absurd](#) "etiquette" rules for women re-entering society as a way of making a point about people trying to go back to their supposedly "normal" lives with the claimed "end" of the pandemic, comic [stories about science, upcoming](#) cultural war battles, [criticizing](#) those who embrace awfulness by looking the "bright side" of exploitation, and the spread [of the pandemic](#) at the summer Olympics. Other illustrations [lampoon](#) the ridiculous and sexist rules for clothes Olympic athletes have to wear, efforts to prepare for a pandemic which [lead to failure](#), and the [privilege of Tucker Carlson](#) which he hides from his viewers.

That's all for this week! Until next time. Hope you all have a good week ahead.

- Burkely

# That AHA letter, the role of archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and more

This week I'll be writing about the same topics as usual, along with a focus about recent letter from the AHA, new leadership at the SAA, and many other topics

*[Newsletter originally published [on August 8, 2021](#)]*



*Luz looks up information about humans in newspapers at the public library in The Owl House episode "Through the Looking Glass Ruins"*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good week. I have been following, closely, the recent fallout from AHA's passive aggressive, [condescending](#), [elitist](#) letter to NARA, [reeking of privilege](#), saying that archivists should work more, hire back retired workers, work on weekends, and anything else to ensure the "precious" historical researchers get all the help they need, opening it all up, [pandemic be damned](#). I put together threads [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) on Twitter, bringing together some responses to this from archivists, historians, and the like. The AHA  [appended the letter](#), after a few days, with [an apology](#), but this didn't change the fact that the AHA is behind the times, with a divide between scholars who use [social media platforms](#) and those who use email/listservs, as [some pointed out](#). Others thanked the AHA [for the apology](#), saying it honestly recognizes their mistakes, [hoped](#) that they never said such an awful letter again, [noted that](#) archivists were rightly offended by the letter, hoped the AHA [would rethink](#) their relationship with archives and archivists going forward, [hoped](#) for self-reflection on the part

of the AHA, argued that the AHA should recognize the [invisible labor which keeps](#) archives functioning, maintains access to records, and such.

Some said that historians [should know](#) that context matters, [asking](#) who the AHA serves and what role they play, remaining [thankful](#) of the relationships between archivists and historians, saying that in the apology the AHA [owns up](#) to their mistakes, hoping for [beginning of efforts](#) to “build solidarity and support with archivists, librarians, curators etc.” who work together already, [thanked archivists](#) for holding AHA accountable, noted [that tensions](#) between archivists and historians have bubbled to the surface, and criticizing the letter in and of itself [as a bad idea](#). Beyond that, in the past week I have published two reviews, one about examining “archives” in [one of my favorite webcomics](#) and another on a [librarian in an animated series](#) I enjoy. Oh, and I am keeping two family history blogs on hiatus for the time being, so I can focus on other family history research, using my time more wisely going forward. With that, let me move forward with the rest of my newsletter.

There is a lot of news about archives this week, apart from what I have noted in the newsletter already. Connected to this is a comment by [digital archivist Emily Higgs Kopin](#), that those working in libraries and archives have had a massive amount of “additional work added to their plates since the pandemic started,” with everyone overworked, stretched too thin, and having burnouts. I’ve been loosely following news from the current SAA conference [using #SAA21](#) hashtag, including [the remarks](#) (shared by [Alexia D Puravida](#)) at the Chartier Membership meeting by the newly elected SAA’s Vice-President, Courtney Chartier. She responded to the AHA letter, describing it as condescending and not written “with much compassion for the people who staff archival institutions” and called it “truly an exercise in despair.” She noted that while she cares about researchers, she cares about her colleagues more, saying the profession does some things badly but “does some things with great grace” and concluded by saying that “we all deserve grace.”

On a related note, I wrote [back in March 2020](#) about Chartier’s argument for more pathways for “talented and passionate people” to reach the SAA leadership, calling for people to “truly and authentically understand each other” in order to solve existing communication problems, and arguing that the SAA is not “critically engaging the breadth of archivists with how our world is changing the profession” but should improve this in the future. Otherwise, there were stories about how NARA is [working with “20 federal agencies](#) to support the celebration of the U.S. semiquincentennial,” that senior archivist David Langbart at NARA [is receiving the Anna K. Nelson Prize](#) in Archival Excellence from the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations, and Algerians [urging France](#) to open their colonial archives.

From now until August 20, people can [comment](#) on the [2022-2026 Draft Strategic Plan for NARA](#), which reaffirms existing parts, while updating “strategic objectives to reflect our increased commitment to equity, inclusion, and the customer experience” and accelerating agency modernization, according to [NARA’s summary](#). There was the [#ArchivesHashtagParty](#) focusing on #ArchivesAthletes, which [began yesterday](#), and the Vermont State Archivist, Tanya Marshall, [appointed](#) to serve on the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress. Of interest is a [call by ArchivesAWARE](#) for “unique, moving, or humorous archival stories,” with a

deadline of August 31, an [introduction](#) of Jacqueline Price Osafo, the SAA's New Executive Director, and a farewell message [from Rachel Vagts](#), the outgoing SAA President, noting changes in SAA leadership and among archives in response to the pandemic.



Courtesy of [Archives in Fiction](#), in Marvel's *Silk* (2021, no.2) there is a mention of an arcade game named "Killer Librarians." That has to be one interesting game.

There are a number of stories in the world of libraries. Some [rightly criticized](#) a *Yahoo! News* description of a librarian is incorrect, and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* noted colleagues of Latanya Jenkins, a wonderful Black female librarian, who said the punitive sick leave policy of Temple University [ran her into the ground](#), causing Jenkins to suffer as she got sicker and sicker from cancer. In a more positive note, I was glad to see that Jennifer Snoek-Brown [mentioned me](#) in her recent post on her *Reel Librarians* blog, noting that I regularly emails her "with updates of animated TV series with librarian and library scenes." So that's cool.

People may be interested in *Hack Library School's* [call for guest posts](#), especially from "any current library & information science (LIS) student" with some "exceptions for non-LIS students or LIS professionals....on a case-by-case basis." Workers of the New York Public Library are [speaking out](#) about mounting COVID-19 fears, a library [weakly removed](#) their sign about systemic racism, giving into those who complained about it as "offensive," libraries across the U.S. are [ending their fines](#) for overdue books, and [some said](#) that libraries should be paying attention to the #SaveNilesLibrary campaign. The latter is because one low-turnout election can change the entire makeup of a library board completely. The *Washingtonian* profiled a look at

[DC's newest library branch](#), IMLS Director Crosby Kemper III [talked about](#) “learning through the pandemic and leaning into the future,” and the ALA is adopting a new Code of Ethics [principle on racial and social justice](#).

This connects to what [April Hathcock wrote](#) about in August 2016: that “diversity initiatives have been largely unsuccessful in increasing the numbers of librarians of color,” noting that “librarians of color...often end up working isolated in a profession that is 97% white” (recent stats actually show the profession is [only 86% White](#) if we say that the ALA’s membership accurately reflects the library profession, which has been thrown into question) adding that while there is an importance to networking and mentoring opportunities in such initiatives, she asks how many people couldn’t, or didn’t participate in panels on diversity because they couldn’t meet requirements “rooted in our system of whiteness and false meritocracy.”

There’s a lot of news in the genealogy field. I am very annoyed, angry, and disappointed with Ancestry declaring that they will be able to, by September 2, share the content on their platform (if it’s not on a private tree) permanently unless you delete it, as I noted in a [thread on Twitter](#). People responded saying that it is [just a way](#) for Ancestry to make more money, that they were [glad they never](#) added non-ancestry materials to theirs, or [even called it a “fascist” measure](#). On a related note, one genealogist, Mish Holman, even said that she is putting watermarks on her photos to prevent them from being commercialized by Ancestry something which I’d be willing to do (even if it is [a “big job”](#) as she put it), provided I can save the original photographs, somewhere. Apart from this is [a Baltimore Sun story](#), which my mom shared with me in the past week, about Joe Biden’s ancestral ties to Baltimore. It notes that his father and grandparents lived in Charles Village and is a fascinating article on the whole. While there are so many other posts I could include, I enjoyed reading [Nicka Smith’s post on genealogy success](#) by “avoiding common pitfalls when beginning your genealogy research,” how genealogy sites [lack diverse DNA](#) and are struggling to identify people of color. The article noted that Indigenous people may not trust the testing, Black people may not be able to afford it, and those outside the U.S. do not have the programs marketed to them. All of this is no surprise to me. On an investigative note are posts about [elusive ancestors](#), [identifying unknown portraits](#), and solving [genealogy mysteries](#), if you are interested in that.

Apart from great memes like [this one](#) for the awful AHA letter, there were articles about historical topics. For one is the story of Mountbattens’ unseen [personal diaries published](#) amid a UK court battle, along with Black voices at the Museum of the American Revolution being showcased [in a new exhibit](#). *Smithsonian* magazine focused on a number of topics, including the importance of going beyond the female firsts [in science history](#), the [endangered places](#) which tell complex stories, and Germany acknowledging genocide from 1904 to 1908 [in Namibia](#). Although they are paying for infrastructure improvements in the country, the German government has refused to directly compensate victims of the genocide, leading to justified protests in Germany as they refuse to accept responsibility for a genocide, only wanting to give money and make it go away. Then there are the stories in *Scalawag* [about untold stories](#) of the queer South, how those histories [inform the present](#), and murals, and street art, in London [during the 1980s](#), to give a few examples.

That brings me to topics which didn't fit in other parts of this newsletter. There are stories about how vaccine hesitancy is [a 21st century phenomenon](#), a concept for a private luxury train which will cost over 300 million dollars and only [be for the wealthy](#) (and presumably others who work on the train), making it sound just like *Snowpiercer*, and Argentina [has become the first country](#) in Latin America to "officially recognize gender nonbinary people." *Smithsonian* magazine [noted](#) how climate change is remaking the Arctic, how people [can learn](#) echolocation in ten weeks, and that puppies are [born ready](#) to communicate with humans.

There is a [post by Hathcock](#) in September 2016, talking about how scholarly communication conversations are "saturated in the values and ideals of the white North American and Western European, neoliberal researcher," even though the idea of "commoning" has its roots in "indigenous and native notions." She called for "dialogue, real dialogue, that decenters white North American and Western European values and knowledge creation."

In closing, I enjoyed reading illustrations in *The Nib* about [the alternate reality](#) of those who support the former president, [false ideas](#) people have on unions, [doing your part](#) to fight the pandemic, and the [selective memory](#) of the GOP, to name a few of my favorites which I came across in the past week.

That's all for this week. Hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Weeding library collections, the A\*Census II, the AHA letter, Ancestry's content grab, the Afghan war, and much more

This week I'll be bringing you the latest news about archives, libraries, genealogy, and history, along with recent posts I've published

*[Newsletter originally published [on August 15, 2021](#)]*



*Beware of the “forbidden stacks”! This is from The Owl House episode “Through the Looking Glass Ruins”*

Good evening everyone! Happy [National Relaxation Day](#)! I hope you all had a good weekend. I'd like to first talk about library weeding, since that has been all the hubbub recently, after someone cried when they saw “important” books from a library in a dumpster, not recognizing the condition of the books or even trying to ask a librarian why this happened. I put together three Twitter Moments [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) about it. I'd also recommend reading Claire Sewell's [“Weeding Is Fundamental: On Libraries and Throwing Away Books”](#), which covers the importance of weeding materials in library settings. It makes me think of what a character, a medical doctor/librarian, said in [one of my friend's stories](#) back in February 2020: “Books are not sacred objects and should not be worshiped.” I still agree with it today, even more than when I first read it. On a related note, my friend recently published a story, titled [“Power by Any Means Necessary”](#), with an amazing non-binary archivist, who is slowly falling in love with another one of my friend's characters, as a protagonist. My friend admitted that while they could have

incorporated archives more into the story, records destruction are the story's themes, as something happens to the archives.

Otherwise, I am proud of my posts reviewing the [overworked \(and exhausted\) librarian](#) in *We Bare Bears* and another on the [interlinking](#) of archives (and bureaucracy) in an episode of *Phineas and Ferb* on blogs that I run. With that, let me move on with the rest of my newsletter, which will be a little more text-heavy than last week, just fair warning.

There's some interesting news about archives to share this week. Some people talked about [how archives have tight budgets](#) with not enough money to have people only responsible for operating reading rooms, others [said that](#) archives (and library) professionals have gone above and beyond to support research during the pandemic, and some [had threads](#) on digitization, working conditions, and precarious labor. On the other hand, one archivist [argued](#) that "Ivy League schools should not be hiring project archivists," while Denver's NARA Facility [noted](#) that Adolph Coors signed some letters from USDC case file holdings. Then, Archives in Fiction, highlighted archives in episodes [16](#) and [18](#) of *Alias*, a sci-fi/triller TV series.

I am glad to see that progress is [being made for the A\\*Census II](#), as the last census was done 17 years ago! As the SAA puts it, this census will help "understand who is doing the [archival] work now, the issues that archives workers face, how we're being compensated, and so much more." This census will be broader than the last one, including "every self-identified archivist/archives and community memory worker in the U.S.," with the latter as new to this census. The first survey for the census will be released in October 2021 and the survey of administrators will begin in early 2022, with results of the surveys published in *American Archivist* and data "available via the SAA Dataverse for use in individuals' and institutions' future research."

On a related note is the [response by the SAA](#) to the problematic / misguided letter I talked about in last week's newsletter. The statement from the SAA said, in part:

...SAA appreciates AHA's intent to support NARA in the face of misinformation and unreasonable demands on the agency's staff. SAA expects such support to be constructive and written in consultation with the archives community...Archives...are operating in response to circumstances that are specific to each institution...SAA expects researchers to extend goodwill, grace, and respect to archivists when they institute procedural changes to public access operations due to our ongoing public health emergency...The relationship among archivists, researchers, and communities must be founded on reciprocity and mutual respect...SAA is always open to dialogue and deeper coordination with AHA, as well as other professional organizations that value and require the expertise of archivists, access to archival collections, and the many services we provide.

This makes me think of Maarja Krusten's criticism of my characterization of the letter in my last newsletter. My back-and-forth with her on Twitter seen [here](#). Speaking of statements, on [August](#)

9, the Indigenous Archives Collective announced the publication of the *Indigenous Archives Collective Statement on the Right of Reply to Indigenous Knowledges and Information held in Archives*, [a statement](#) which, in their words, supports the work of their collective to “assert the rights of Indigenous peoples to challenge and respond to their information and knowledges contained in archival records held in Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museum (GLAM) institutions through a *Right of Reply*.” Just as important as these issues is [a recap](#) of a conversation about accessibility and web archiving, [dispatches](#) from MARAC Spring 2021, [lessons learned](#) during the COVID-19 closure, and the Mukurtu Workshop and Panel Event which [focused on](#) “the Mukurtu content management system and how people are using it to meaningfully approach privacy of and access to Indigenous collections.”

That brings me to libraries. The most exciting news in this field is not Librarian of Congress [Carla Hayden praising](#) AOC’s blasé statement on library workers and librarians, saying that “libraries are community equalizers and ready to serve all their users,” or the [Abolitionist Library Association pushing to remove](#) police from libraries, but rather that *Ascendance of A Bookworm* is returning! You might ask, why, Burkely, are you so excited about an anime? Well, as you may remember, I wrote about this show [in August of last year](#), noting how libraries are central to the anime itself as the protagonist wants to be a librarian and is pretty vocal about it, with a whole episode where she explains the classification system she will use for the library. That’s something you don’t see every day! Anyway, no exact date is known, but it’s clear that the series will be coming back [sometime in Spring 2022](#).

Other than this, there were some assorted stories of note. In a column for *Publisher’s Weekly*, Sari Feldman, a former ALA president, [called for](#) library leaders to see the present as a “once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to truly transform the future of libraries,” and *Book Riot*, in [an article](#) about how the Leander, Texas school district pulled books from the reading list, recalled that the director of Leander’s public library [was pushed out](#) in October 2019 when a Pride story time was hosted at the library! Erin Berman and Bonnie Tijerina, project leaders on the IMLS grant project, ‘Privacy Advocacy Guides for Libraries,’ [were interviewed](#) by *Choose Privacy Every Day*. The IFLA [shared a post](#) on lessons of the pandemic at the World Intellectual Property Organisation’s SCCR (Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights) and had a post [reflecting](#) on the International Day of the World’s Indigenous Peoples. The *Boston Globe* noted how Cambridge, MA is the [latest library system](#) to hire a social worker. Jennifer Snoek-Brown [interviewed](#) two real librarians in Serbia, Valentina (Tina) and Ljubomir (Ljuba) Branković, who talk about their librarian duties, note that “librarian portrayals are stereotypical in Serbia movies,” favorite reel librarian movies, and more! It’s worth a read. I may create something like the “movie inserts with library scenes” that Ljuba created but with animated series. On a related note is Snoek-Brown’s post about [being part](#) of the scholarly conversation about librarians in movies.

There’s a lot of news when it comes to the Library of Congress (LOC). Of course, there’s some about topics like [Aslihan Bulut being appointed](#) Law Librarian of Congress, the [publication](#) of a new report on children’s online privacy and data protection, a post about the experiences of [a mostly-archivist LOC team making a cake](#) recipe soprano Jessye Norman contributed to a cookbook in the 1990s, a post asking if billionaires are going into space or not, [noting](#) there is

no legal consensus on what counts as outer space (who knew!), and a post about the [origin](#) of the name “America” (first used on a 1507 map). Then there is a rash of interviews. While I thought the [interview](#) with Willa Armstrong, Digital Accessibility Specialist, was intriguing, the set of posts on remote Digital Resources Division interns for LOC was more fascinating for me, as most of these people are in my age bracket.

The [first group](#) of 20 came from a diverse set of schools and places across the U.S., with the nerd who liked *Battlestar Galactica*, the guitar player, and a person who cataloged a home library of 1700 books as some of the most fascinating. The [second group](#) of 22, included those who rescued kittens, like baking, and a massage therapist. The [third group](#) of 20, included people who watch sunrises, do rock climbing, and writing. The fourth group [of 20](#), had people who participated in mock trial, played piano, built anime robot models, and idled through art museums. Still relevant, on a related topic, is April Hathcock’s [post in 2016](#), noting that LOC refused to add White privilege as a subject heading, something which critical classification activist (as Hathcock described him) Sandy Berman, among many others, had been fighting for. Hathcock noted that while LOC is welcoming a Black woman as the head of the organization, it still refused to acknowledge White privilege as a reality beyond racism or racial identity, even though all White people have it to some degree or another.

On a different, but still important topic, is genealogy. Polish-American genealogist Steve Szabados [talks about](#) the issue with Ancestry which I noted last week. He noted that the company’s soon-to-be-implemented policy (retaining content on their site posted on public trees permanently unless deleted) unmasks the issue with using “online family trees as the primary tool in saving and compiling our family history,” saying that family histories go beyond this, containing “stories that bring our ancestors alive.” He calls for compiling research offline “into notes and summaries of your ancestors,” which gives you flexibility, telling people to “save your family history using another method that remains private and understandable by your family.” I understand that urge, but why not have a blog on family history, like my [Packed with Packards!](#) for example? You can still do something privately, but with a public blog, you can make family history findings still public without having it be scooped by Ancestry so a few people can profit off your research. For other perspectives on Ancestry’s recent decision to have perpetual rights to content on their platform, see articles in [Gizmodo](#), [DIY Photography](#), and [PetaPixel](#).

I also liked reading about in-person research at libraries and archives from two researchers: first, [Keith Zahniser](#), and second [Emily Greenwald](#), noting that people should get vaccinated to ensure that these locations remain open. What a unique way of looking at it, which hopefully can encourage some people to get vaccinated. I read [a recent post on The Hidden Branch](#) about young genealogists with interest. But I was a bit disappointed when it said that “a young genealogist by definition is young and for us, that means between the ages of 13 and 24.” Strangely, while gender demographics were mentioned (“there are more female young genealogists than males”), nothing about race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, at minimum, was mentioned, making me think that most of the people mentioned in the post are White. It is an oversight, which should be corrected, and a lack of transparency on their part.

On a related topic is [a newly recovered 1787 deed](#), “detailing the contentious fight over property and prestige” in the family tree of the Smithsonian founder, James Smithson, can be found in a new exhibit by the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives. The latter, titled “[A Tale of Two Sisters: The Hungerford Deed and James Smithson’s Legacy](#),” allows people to view the record online, with the article noting the conservation work needed to restore the document. Even [one page](#) has a family chart showing the genealogy of the Hungerford family. Altogether, it is very fascinating, and it gives me some ideas for displaying my family history.

Speaking of history, there were some stories worth sharing this week. For one was a [tweet thread](#) by a historian of vaccination, Aparna Nair, noting that vaccines have “always been required for international travel,” Boston African American NHS having a #ParkChat about enslavement and [many other topics](#), the New York Historical Society [establishing](#) an institute dedicated to community activism, and an [exclusive memo](#) showing that Watergate prosecutors had evidence that Nixon planned to attack “anti-war demonstrators in 1972, including potentially physically attacking Vietnam whistleblower Daniel Ellsberg.” Then there’s the [Directory of History Dissertations](#) from the AHA (over 57,000 in the directory presently) and a number of *Smithsonian* magazine history-related articles. This includes [a story on a DNA test](#) showing than an elite Finnish person was likely intersex and possibly non-binary, noting that while medieval Scandinavia is often seen as ultra-masculine, there were “people living outside of a strict gender binary,” with one scholar saying that this study demonstrates that “early medieval societies had very nuanced approaches to and understandings of gender identities.” Other stories touched on [enduring](#) myths of *Raiders of the Lost Ark* which negatively affected the archaeology profession, a study finding that many feathered dinosaurs were [more aerodynamic](#) than previously thought, and [immigrant history](#) of the NYC neighborhood behind *In the Heights*.

There are several topics which should be talked about but do not easily fit into the existing categories of this newsletter. First and foremost is the Taliban victory in Afghanistan (and the end of the war there), which Republicans [are wringing their hands over](#), declaring Biden has “blood on his bands,” trying to distract people from the fact that their hands are bloody too (and they [tried to broker](#) a peace deal under the former president), as a Republican president started the war in 2001. As of April 2021, more than 71,000 Afghan and Pakistani civilians are “estimated to have died as a direct result of the war,” [according to the Watson Institute](#), part of the [hundreds of thousands](#) who have died as a result of wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen, Syria, and Pakistan, instigated by the U.S. There is also the billions [spent on a war](#) there which has been a waste of [time, resources, and material](#), only bringing certain benefits to a small group of people, with the war continuing through Republican and Democratic administrations, and the causes having roots in misguided, self-serving Cold War policies of the U.S. Whether China recognizes the Taliban, or not, I wouldn’t be surprised if the U.S. does the same, even if they publicly condemn the new government, but privately keep the aid, and support, flowing.

Just as big news is the [release of 2020 Census redistricting data](#) which shows, in the words of the census, that the U.S. is “much more multiracial and more diverse” than in the past, with a decrease in those identifying as White by 8.6% since 2010, while the multiracial population has increased 276%, with those identifying as “some Other Race” surpassing the Black population. There are still huge racial populations of people identifying as Asian, Indigenous, Native

Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and Latino, with the latter growing 23% since 2010. While it is noted that this data should be taken with caution, with improvements in questions, it also said that over 78% of the population are over age 18.

Also of note is Lonnie Bunch of the Smithsonian [talking about](#) how the U.S. needs to reckon with its racist past as part of a new initiative, Facebook [booting](#) NYU researchers studying at disinformation [from their platform](#), a growing number of parents [choosing to stick](#) with homeschooling over sending kids back to public schools, museums and libraries [joining forces](#) to boost confidence in vaccines, and [how five percent](#) of power plants release 73% of global electricity production emissions, with some of the “worst offenders” being “inefficient coal-fired power plants located in East Asia, Europe and India.” There were also wonderful illustrations from *The Nib* about: pets [responding](#) to the climate report, billionaires [launching](#) into space, [conservative lies](#) about the Delta variant, [the UN report](#) calling on humans to cut emissions, and the U.S. [calling on](#) OPEC allies to pump more oil.

That's all for this week. Until next week! Hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# The value of records, a NARA mini-documentary, library unionization, bias in Library of Congress headings, the ALA, history, and beyond!

Happy Tuesday everyone! Today I'll be bringing you the latest news and analysis of assorted archives, libraries, genealogy, and history topics.

*[Newsletter originally published on August 24, 2021]*



From a shiny, new card, to a beat-up one, all in one episode of *The Owl House* ("Through the Looking Glass Ruins"). I wonder what happened to Amity's card... dun dun dun! Amity is one of the most prominent librarians in animation right now.

Hello everyone! I hope you are all doing well! With cleaning out of two closets with clothes and other stuff, I've been a bit busy in the past two days, so that's why this newsletter is going out today instead of the usual date on Sunday. Last Tuesday, I [penned a post](#) about the unnamed librarian shusher in *Steven Universe* who was sort of redeemed in some of the comics of the series and on Friday I shared some episodes and such [analyzed by a British archivist](#) which notes examples of archives in fiction. In the past week, I was impressed with posts from my colleagues at NSA about [the Afghanistan War](#) and biometric devices [captured by the Taliban](#). So those are both worth a read, especially the first one as it uses Snowflakes that me and my colleagues worked to index and make more accessible to people! So that put a smile on my face to see that. With that, let me move onto the rest of this newsletter!

With the coming of the Taliban into power in Afghanistan, coupled with the U.S. withdrawal from a war in a country where the U.S. should have never been involved in the first place, some commented that "[human lives are more important than records](#)," in response to the founder of an all-girls boarding school in the country destroying her student's records. On a related note is [noting how](#) archives support their communities (well, we hope they do), efforts to digitize records, specifically military records in the [case of NARA](#), and the British Library putting [over 1 million](#) newspaper pages online for free. Also of note was the story of an archives technician

Jesse Wilinski who teamed up with National Archives video producer John Heyn [to create a story](#) “that explores the life and death of Charles Sprout, a soldier in the United States Colored Troops (USCT).” This is available in a documentary published on NARA’s YouTube channel, which talks, in part, about how records aren’t “dead” but are of “living” because they are records “of people who actually lived and did great things” and how the archives are key for park rangers to be able to do their jobs:

[https://youtu.be/P07gWZEy\\_Zw](https://youtu.be/P07gWZEy_Zw)

Other than this, there were posts about primary sources in NARA holdings [about the Olympics](#), [the availability](#) of Consular Dispatches, from 1783 to 1906, on NARA’s Catalog, a notice providing a “[partial waiver](#) for the Declassification Review of Certain White House, National Security Council, and Homeland Security Council Records,” the SAA [looking for](#) nominations for the Vice President/President-Elect, Council Member, and Nominating Committee positions within the organization, and the finding of NSV documents in a house [which are being sorted and viewed by employees](#) of a city archive in Hagen, Germany, showing the continued value of archives once again! Otherwise, there were some documents shared by archives about [Alexander Hamilton](#), a [commemorative stamp](#) from the Postal Service on the Apollo 11 landing, a signature of Bill Clinton a document [wishing](#) the Department of the Interior a 150th anniversary in 1999, the elegant signature of a “slippery character” (and [Scottish-born Crown sympathizer](#)) in papers from Henry Clinton, and [an autographed](#) tour program of Louis Armstrong and his concert group.

That brings me to libraries. First and foremost, as I [said on Twitter](#), if you know of any webcomics with librarians, with the letters A, E, F, H, I, J, K, O, Q, V, W, X, or Y, let me know! I’ll do my own searching, of course, but what I search for can be limited, which is why I’m asking here. Anyway, there were stories about mobile libraries in Afghanistan [in response](#) to the Taliban takeover, the [challenges](#) of finding ISSNs for journals, and anger at the ALA [possibly connecting](#) to the top leaders of the ALA being majority people of color. While some responded to the latter saying they agreed, [others said](#) the reason for anger at the ALA was due to lack of advocacy on behalf of library workers early on in the pandemic, or that the ALA [cares more about libraries as a concept](#) than actual library workers. In any case, it was interesting to see the discourse around this as someone in the archives and libraries fields. I say this as someone constantly wondering whether I will keep my ALA or SAA membership next year, as my ALA and SAA membership will both expire on March 31. Currently, I’m leaning more toward letting my ALA membership lapse. I mean, will we ever see the ALA speaking out against the board of trustees of Worthington, Ohio libraries voting to not “recognize a demand by library staff to unionize, forcing employees to move toward its own vote”?

In [this case](#), 70% of Worthington staff members had “signed and turned in union cards to the State Employee Relations Board” yet the board sneered and decided to not recognize it! Of librarians, 75% are NOT unionized nationwide, even though “[union librarians](#) typically earn 38% [higher salaries](#) than those not in unions.” That’s terrible. In Ohio itself, while there are “30 collective bargaining agreements among Ohio’s 251 public libraries,” the only library in Central

Ohio which has a union is Fairfield County District Library, which has “52 employees, 34 of which are bound by a union contract,” but only five of those 34 pay union dues.

When has the ALA ever spoken about [unionization](#) in libraries? The Social Responsibilities Round Table (SRRT), a unit within the ALA which seeks to make the organization more democratic and “establish progressive priorities” for the association and profession has raised this issue a couple times, passing the resolutions each time. This included, [a 1980 resolution to support](#) Massachusetts librarians unionizing, a [1982 resolution](#) to support the right of Chicago Public Library to unionize, a [1996 resolution](#) supporting Omaha Library Workers, and [a 2008 resolution](#) to oppose sweatshop labor and support union businesses. According to the SRRT’s list of resolutions, the 1982 resolution was rejected by the ALA Council and the 2008 resolution was changed to remove support for union businesses! Reading their list gives the impression that the ALA, and especially its council, has taken very conservative and reactionary positions, starting in the mid-1980s, but the amount of rejections after 2000 are higher than in any other period. In 2018, an article in *American Libraries* quoted Aliqae Geraci, chair of the American Library -Association-Allied Professional Association Standing Committee on the Salaries and Status of Library Workers, as [saying that](#) “...librarians have a special responsibility to raise their occupational wage floor, to make room for support staff to achieve higher wages. We have an ethical obligation to raise everybody up.”

What I have said about the ALA here is, of course, not comprehensive, but it is my belief it is the case and I’d ask readers to find any recent resolutions by the ALA where unionization has been mentioned, using [this search](#) for example, as ALA resources like “Unions in Libraries” [were last updated](#) in 2000. Of note on this topic, is [April Hathcock’s post](#) in December 2016 criticizing “collaborator statements that ALA administration released immediately” after the election of the former traitorous President. She argued at the time that the ALA “does not care about its members or their communities...[it] cares only about...funding libraries.” She further said that the ALA will “gladly sell out its members and their communities for this bottom line,” colluding with anyone possible. While she did not talk about unionization specifically, what she said applies to this, as it could explain the ALA’s non-action on unionization.

Moving on, some wrote [about summer directed fieldwork](#) as part of an MLIS program, [no more late fees](#) at Louisville’s public libraries, Southern University’s Library [telling](#) the stories of former slaves, a book fairy [keeping](#) the wretched Little Free Libraries (often filled with trash books from my experience) filled, [an article](#) about staff perceptions and experiences with drag queen storytime, and an [interview](#) with Chris Brain, foreign law intern working on the Global Legal Research Directorate, part of the Law Library of Congress. Out of all of this is a post, by [River Freemont](#), that stands out. Freemont’s post [explores](#) bias and Library of Congress subject headings (LCSH), noting gaps in headings which do not “fully convey the meaning of these works,” the cases when “subject headings being used were inappropriate or outdated.” She also did research for pansexuality to be a new LCSH and to support a change in the heading from “sexual minority culture” to “queer culture,” while learning about the process for proposing headings, with complicated rules, and the fact that it can “take over two months to receive a ruling on your proposal”! She also noted Violet Fox’s [Cataloging Lab](#), the lack of “representation from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), public and school libraries, and

international libraries,” and her overall experiences at the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives. Hat tip to Fox for mentioning this article [back on August 17](#), as I wouldn’t have seen it otherwise.

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CS9bwurkW0/>

Having talked about archives and libraries, it makes sense to move onto the third major topic of this newsletter: genealogy. I enjoyed reading about the genealogy research project [which could help preserve](#) Gullah Geechee lands, the National Library of Australia noting the various British and Irish maps [they have in their collections](#) which can help family historians, digital age trailblazers [trying to preserve](#) Austin’s Latino history, [the story](#) of Captain George Pointer. He was an enslaved, and later free, Black man who helped build the C&O Canal and his “descendants owned the large plot of land in upper Northwest for 80 years before it was claimed by eminent domain to serve the fast-growing and all-white Chevy Chase neighborhood around it.” Otherwise, there were posts about how a woman [exploring her family's history](#) exposed its unsettling legacy of slavery in New Hampshire, an explanation of how deep dives [into slavery research](#) are justified, a guide to [using Google](#) for family history, [when to seek](#) professional help with your family tree, and the value of [tombstones](#).

Then there’s history. *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about an enormous Roman basilica [dated to King Herod's reign](#), [the history](#) of the rainbow flag, Robert E. Lee’s former home reopening with renewed [focus on the enslaved](#), scientists [reviving](#) tiny animals that spent 24,000 years on ice, the story of two farmers [found](#) the largest dinosaur ever unearthed in Australia, and [how you can](#) explore an unseen trove of Franz Kafka’s personal papers. Other articles in the same magazine focused on the U.S. government’s failed attempt to forge unity through currency [in the late 1890s](#), the [discovery](#) of a 1,000-year-old chicken egg, the [most invincible](#) hotels in the U.S., an enslaved man [buried in England](#) between 226-427 A.D., and the [history](#) of policing women’s trauma. Furthermore, other publications [focused on](#) battles over calling killing of indigenous people genocide (it is), Trevor Owens, Head of Digital Content Management at the United States Library of Congress, talking about [how he does history](#), French [efforts to support](#) the revolutionary cause in the Revolutionary War, and [the value](#) of student engagement with primary sources.

There are other stories and topics which don’t neatly fit into the categories of archives, libraries, genealogy, or history. For instance, there is [a referendum](#) on the right to housing in Ireland, an article [explaining](#) how to make the most of metadata, *Remezcla* [talking about](#) Afro-Latino erasure in Hollywood, *Smithsonian* [explaining](#) efforts by some scientists to pull carbon dioxide from the ocean and turn it into rock, and the same publication noting that COVID antibodies [detected](#) in wild deer. There were also studies about how climate change [may increase](#) the spread of plant pathogens, not surprisingly, and [thawing](#) of permafrost in Siberia releasing more methane. As always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. This week I found ones [about the storming](#) of the Capitol being lost to history, how [we are all](#) “haunted by the gender sorting machine we’re passed through at birth,” the fear of parents [who are bringing](#) their kids back to in-person schooling, the [supposed](#) “new normal,” the botched exit [from the long war](#) in Afghanistan, [virtue signaling](#) and the pandemic, and [fears of a pundit](#) who is suddenly caring about the people of Afghanistan. My favorite, however, was Gemma Correll’s “[protective](#)

[clothing for the socially reluctant](#)." You always see so many styles with these illustrations and an array of topics, which is why I like them so much.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a great rest of your week ahead! I haven't decided whether I'll publish a newsletter this upcoming Sunday or do it another day, but I will likely publish it then, just to be consistent.

- Burkely

# Pop culture, indie animation, archival research, LGBTQ archives, librarians under threat, the 1893 Hawaii coup, the value of fanfics, and beyond!

Happy Monday! Today I will be bringing you a selection of articles on archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and related topics.

*[Newsletter originally published [on August 30, 2021](#)]*



*Mystic library shown in an episode of the *Rise of the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. I haven't watched any episodes other than this one, but despite the librarian being terrible (a bat that attacks people), this library is pretty amazing, grand, and beautiful if I must say so myself!*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week! This newsletter is going out on Monday, unlike my last newsletter that went out on Tuesday the 24th. Apart from [my candidacy](#) to become a member of the SAA's Issues & Advocacy Section's Steering Committee, I have a number of posts I'd like to share. On August 25, I published a post about [a library sale/adventure](#) in two *Steven Universe* comics. A few days later, I analyzed *Pale Cocoon* on my blog, [talking about](#) digital archives and archivists in the OVA. In response to the post, Archives in Fiction told me that the series has some "[potentially interesting discussion points](#)...regarding archival standards and practices." I can't agree more! Then, two days ago, at long last, my post about [the indie animation boom and crowdfunded animation](#) was published. I

hope to use it to build off and write reviews of different shows in the days, months, and years ahead. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

There was a lot of chatter about archives this week, including a recent SNAP Section discussion about applying for archives jobs, so if you are interested in that, I recommend going [over to their Twitter account](#) and following the discussion from there. Related to that is a video on the SAA's YouTube channel titled "[Starting a New Position During a Pandemic?](#)," first [noted](#) by archivist, librarian, and public historian Marissa Friedman. Anyway, there were some archivist memes about [ongoing relations with alive donors](#) and [the tension](#) between archivists and historians. If you haven't read it already, I highly recommend going through [Courtney Chartier's remarks on August 3](#) to the annual SAA Membership Business Meeting, which partially responds to the AHA's badly-informed and deeply problematic letter to NARA, and makes other comments. Related to what I wrote about last week is [a Reuters article](#) on how Afghans are worrying that "biometric databases and their own digital history can be used to track and target them," with suggestions on how to bypass biometric tools (wearing makeup, looking down), and Afghans trying to scrub their digital profiles. On a totally different subject is [a post by Amanda May](#), Digital Conversion Specialist in the Library of Congress's Preservation Services Division writing about how the division "maintains several tools for transferring data off of floppy disks, even items that are damaged or are in uncommon formats," which was of interest to me since I found a bunch of floppy disks in my closet when cleaning it out this week!

In other archives-related news, there was an article about a researcher, Evert Kleynhans, who spent [six years researching at South African and British archives](#) to put together a "fresh account of the German intelligence networks that operated in wartime South Africa," with the Nazis reaching out to the fascist political opposition group [Ossewabrandwag](#) in South Africa, with intelligence gathered helping to spread sedition within South Africa, and undermine the war effort of the Allies. Kleynhans also noted that these events all but vanished from the collective memory of South Africa, pointing at the "gatekeeper mentality at archives, missing documents and the removal of key evidence from public circulation combined to stymie further research on this topic." As it should be clear, archives are not neutral and how documents are arranged, selected, and such, are all decisions which have an impact. Even with this in mind, archival documents can be employed effectively by historians, like a Japanese university professor, Hiroaki Takazawa, [who used declassified U.S. military documents](#) to reveal where Japanese Prime Minister Hideki Tojo was buried, noting that his ashes were "scattered from a U.S. Army aircraft over the Pacific Ocean about 30 miles...east of Yokohama." This mission was done in secret because U.S. officials wanted to ensure that he, and others executed with him in 1948, as part of a war crimes sentence from the [International Military Tribunal for the Far East](#), would not be glorified as martyrs. Takazawa said he plans to continue researching other executions. 920 convicted Japanese war criminals were executed post-WWII.

Other news included Falkland Islands government records manager Chloe Anderson-Wheatley talking about how she developed as [a "young record keeping professional,"](#) Collections Officer at the LOC's Collections Management Division, Preservation Directorate, Beatriz Haspo, writing for LOC about the library's use of a Collections Storage Facility in Maryland (which looks just like archival stacks) [for the last 20 years](#), which allows for the best high-density storage of

records, and a summary of a talk by archivist Madlyn Moskowitz at Walt Disney Family Museum, [explaining](#) how she started as a film archivist at Lucasfilm, learning “the art of packing and creating the items in the company’s collections,” assembled displays, exhibits, and calls her job “physical asset management,” making sure items in the company’s archives are properly stored and accounted for. James Draper of the Museum Director at Air Force Space & Missile Museum noted that [the museum acquired](#) “five massive bins of historic Cape Canaveral videos and films.”

William J. Shepherd, University Archivist and Head of Special Collections at Catholic University, [shared a post](#) about the Plan de Iguala, a rare document dated from 1822 that declares Mexican independence from Spain, and [an article in \*The American Archivist\*](#) reviewing Rebecka Taves Sheffield's monograph, *Documenting Rebellions: A Study of Four Lesbian and Gay Archives in Queer Times*, [which studies](#) “four archives that were constituted with a common desire to preserve the memory and evidence of lesbian and gay people”: The Lesbian Herstory Archives, The ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives, and the ArQuives: Canada’s LGBTQ2+ Archives. Finally, [via a post by Robin Sampson](#), Community Archivist at Norfolk Record Office, were training videos for community archive groups on the Norfolk Record Office's YouTube channel:

<https://youtu.be/TGDLzXnidDw>

That brings me to libraries! The most prominent story I have seen in the past week [comes from \*LGBTQ Nation\*](#), of all places. In this story, a reactionary figure running for Congress, Derrick Van Orden, who is endorsed by the former traitorous president, reportedly threatened staff, like Kerrigan Trautsch, at a Prairie Du Chien, Wisconsin library, for a pride display. In order to disrupt it, he got a library card, checked out every book in the display, declaring the books were “incorrect,” even though some were fictional, and even told a staff member they didn’t have a voice. He [later called](#) one of the books (a fiction about Mike Pence) was “a clear attempt to paint Republicans as being not inclusive,” and his actions ultimately led to those who supported Van Orden to come to a board meeting of the library, complaining about the “LGBTQ agenda,” and later Van Orden [basically said](#) the library staff were lying about what happened. And of course, Van Orden never apologized for this incident. Anyway, the major lesson I take from this is that libraries are NOT neutral spaces, but shaped by those who work there, the communities they serve, and those outside of that, at minimum. Libraries are affected by what goes on in the world around them. Anyone with sense that doesn’t believe the library “neutrality” mentality will recognize this. Beyond this, there was [a post by Hannah Spring Pfeifer](#), a junior fellow at LOC, and an article in the *San Francisco Examiner* noting how staff shortages [are hampering re-openings](#) of San Francisco’s public libraries, as the library system has 141 employment openings, comprising about 15% of its workforce!

In other library-related matters was [the temporary closing](#) of a San Benito County Library after “a group of unmasked protesters entered the library” and refused to put on their masks or leave, an article in *American Libraries* [asking](#) if libraries can protect themselves from copyright suits, [an interview](#) with Greg Lucas, the California State Librarian, the Indianapolis Public Library CEO, Jackie Nytes, [stepping down](#) following discussion of racism and a toxic work environment,

and growing momentum to eliminate bias and racism [in the Dewey Decimal System](#). Otherwise there were stories about Indiana's first Black librarian, Lillian Haydon Childress Hall, [who managed](#) two library branches, and how COVID [has forced us](#) to think of how library services can be offered to people with disabilities. Last but not least are two articles, one in [Library Journal](#) and another in [MarketWatch](#), about calculating the value of library labor and public library. Of course, I can't neglect to mention a post by Jennifer Snoek-Brown [on Reel Librarians](#) about banned books in 'Beautiful Creatures', and April Hathcock, back in January 2017, [writing about](#) an "amazing moment of solidarity and activism with trusted, like-minded individuals who care...about fighting oppression in all its forms" at an ALA meeting, and problems of mainstream activism.

Then there is genealogy! [Smithsonian](#) [noted](#) how newly digitized Freedmen's Bureau records help Black Americans trace their ancestry in an Ancestry database. I checked the database and there are [359 results for "Packard."](#) Are any of those people related to those in my family? I don't know, but I wouldn't mind looking into it to find out for sure. There were also posts about [the discovery](#) of the Essex County Massachusetts 1810 census, [an attempt](#) to get complete details on one person, and [seven resources](#) to search for someone's maiden name. I also liked reading about the [dúchas.ie](#) folklore [collection](#), [solving](#) genealogy mysteries step-by-step, [tackling](#) several genealogy projects on the fly, an [online finding aid](#) of French genealogy research, the [value](#) of fire insurance maps to genealogists, and Becky McCreary, member of Southern Arizona Genealogy Society, [writing](#) "genealogy doesn't stop when you type 'The End.' There is always more to the story," which is something I'll agree with. I was interested by [Avril Bell's article](#) in *Genealogy* about critical family history, which "illuminates societal relations of inequality through focusing on the experiences and trajectories of particular families," with a focus on "unequal relations between white settler colonizers and indigenous communities within Aotearoa, New Zealand."

On a connected note, is history, more generally. I came across William Hogeland writing about [Bacon's Rebellion](#), a podcast [called AHR Interview](#) which "presents brief discussions with historians whose work has appeared in the *American Historical Review*," a new Oregon Trail game which [features playable indigenous characters](#), and History Factory talking about the release of the first commercially produced digital computer [in June 1951](#): the UNIVAC I, which correctly predicted "President Dwight D. Eisenhower's landslide victory," and was praised for the "success and accuracy of complex calculations." It was also interesting to read about [British attempts](#) to convince troops in South Asia during World War II to eat "dehydrated whale meat," [reflections](#) on disease and Indigenous communities, how Indigenous peoples in the South America and Georgia (the Creek) [raised chickens prior](#) to the arrival of Spanish and French explorers in the 1500s," with the post explaining the types of chickens there, when they came to the Americas, and so on, and History Factory [writing about the Cleveland Clinic](#) in Cleveland, Ohio. There were also interesting stories such as history professor Tiya Miles arguing that the history of Black women [is told in their handiwork](#), a [short film](#) which chronicles the lives of Ellen and William Craft, who disguised themselves to find freedom in 1848, and the history of the Portland Clinic, "[Oregon's oldest, private multi-specialty medical group in practice.](#)"

There was also an article about how the 19th Amendment complicated the status and role of women in Hawai'i, as some women submitted their names for political positions but did not realize that "[the right to vote didn't automatically guarantee that women could also hold office](#)," since those in U.S. territories could "could vote in territorial elections...[but] not vote in presidential elections"! This is connected to the overthrow of the Hawaiian constitutional monarchy, which had more than 80 embassies worldwide by 1890, in a U.S.-backed coup in 1893, which deposed [Queen Lili'uokalani](#), and led to a provisional government led by Sanford Dole. The island became a U.S. territory, i.e., a colony, after Grover Cleveland left office, in 1898.

<https://youtu.be/gH5TJ5JTFw>

That brings me to a number of topics which don't easily fit elsewhere in the other parts of this newsletter. Hathcock [rightly notes](#) that "racism is everywhere. It is the norm. It is the foundation upon which every white colonializing country was built," adding that White people, "by virtue of their race privilege, are racist," an [article in the New York Times](#) about protests of the Chinatown museum by those who say it is supporting gentrification, and [using "they" as a gender pronoun](#) in communications. In science-related news are stories about a 'giant arc' stretching 3.3 billion light-years [across the cosmos](#) which shouldn't exist, [the bond](#) between Indigenous groups and bears in Canada, questions whether the world's first space sweeper [can make a dent](#) at debris orbiting the Earth, and [Russia seeing](#) an increasing severity of wildfires in recent years because of rising summer temperatures and a historic drought. There's also, in media-related news, [the racism](#) of the 'hard-to-find' qualified Black candidate trope and one user proposing that the cultural relevance of a film [can be measured](#) by "the number of fanfics on AO3...not the box office gross." The latter noted that "fanfic writers are one small part of the wider pop culture conversation," but it does note the foothold of some pop culture online. Related to this is [Transformative Works and Cultures](#), a publication of the Organization for Transformative Works (OTW), with AO3 as [a project of OTW](#), as [Fanlore](#).

That brings me to the last part of this newsletter, illustrations from *The Nib!* They cover [the beginning of psycho-pharmacology](#), a [loss of belief](#) in America, [the long war](#) in Afghanistan, the [ironies](#) of Afghanistan, the border wall in Arizona in extreme [disrepair](#) (as would be expected), pundits [blaming others](#) and not themselves for the Afghanistan war, and a [fictionalized "wake"](#) for Afghanistan featuring George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, Obama, the former traitorous President, and Biden.

That's all for this week! Due to some prior commitments, Next week's newsletter will be a double issue of two newsletters which would usually come out on 9/5 and 9/12. As such, the newsletter will come out on either the 9th or 10th of next week. With that, I hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Archival stereotypes in Critical Role, the USOPC archivist, archival labor in pop culture, problem with library grit, using gender-neutral terminology for ancestors, history, and more

Hello everyone! In this special Friday edition, I'll be covering the latest news and articles about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and other subjects.

*[Newsletter originally published [on September 10, 2021](#)]*



*Carla (disguised as Rita), in an episode of Elena of Avalor, tries to go through the royal library to find a “weak point” that allows her to get into the royal treasury and fails miserably, yet again*

Hello everyone! Since my last newsletter on August 30, I've been a bit busy, whether going to a wedding of my cousin, watching animated shows, or updating my plethora of blogs. The latter was the case for my blog reviewing librarians in popular culture, where I published posts [proposing the “Librarian Portrayal Test”](#) as I call it, and [recent titles](#) of animated series with librarians or libraries that I came across in July and August. And on September 3, I wrote a post about [the Rick and Morty episode](#) focusing on a break-in at the National Archives, an obvious

reference to the plan in *National Treasure* to steal the Declaration of Independence and...find the secret map on the back in invisible ink. Other than that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

In the world of archives, there were posts by my work colleagues [on Pakistan's nuclear program](#), a joint project between where I work and the Monterey Initiative in Russian Studies which is [trying to "illuminate"](#) archival sources and disseminate information about collections that are available for use by students and young experts in the field," and a post about how Australian spies [aided and abetted the CIA in Chile](#). Then there is a post by Samantha Cross, who has been mentioned in this newsletter repeatedly. She is an archivist who I like to call the "pop archives guru." She published, on August 30, [a deep dive into archives in \*Critical Role\*](#), noting that archives obviously aren't neutral, and neither are museums and libraries, and saying at one point "I cannot stress enough how neutrality as a concept needs to be eliminated from archival thought and processes because there's absolutely no way a person can make an unbiased decision." Cross wrote about how archives and libraries confused, with the archives (Cobalt Soul) nested within the library, use of the messy/dirty archives stereotype, mix-up of terminology, Cobalt Soul having "unique circumstances and threats that stymie its ability to be a functioning archival institution," her concern that archivists are singled out for corrupt, imperialist actions, above anyone else, and the problematic assumption by many that Cobalt Soul is "neutral" when it clearly isn't.

As Cross puts it, rightly, archives and libraries are not the same, as "a library might have an archives or Special Collections and archives certainly have libraries and reading rooms, but they are not synonymous institutions. They have markedly different methods of curation that may overlap at times, but wildly differ when it comes down to the uniqueness of their materials." She concluded by saying while she was disappointed by the portrayal of archives in *Critical Role*, she hopes for improvements, adding that "even the most well-intentioned creatives can still misstep or fall back on old stereotype, whether they're conscious of it or not."

I was intrigued by the story of Amanda McGrory, a full-time archivist for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee (USOPC), who "[works to document](#) the history of the Games, cataloging its extensive collection of items and hunting for potential new treasure troves of information." I learned about her from [Issue 29](#) of Colleen Theisen's "Library News This Week." McGrory [splits](#) her time between working and training as the USOPC archivist, and "reading, eating, napping, live music, and drinking coffee." In [article in \*I Love Libraries\*](#) describes her as a "wheelchair racer" and says she has the professional expertise to be an archivist, but is "the only full-time staffer"! She is fine with being [a lone arranger](#), saying "a lot of being an archivist is about being self-driven, with collection development and accepting artifacts," going onto saying she relies a lot on working independently and her instincts, based on her time as an athlete for many years for TeamUSA. Due to [her archival duties](#), the games last year in Tokyo were her last. According to [her LinkedIn](#), she has been the Archivist and Collections Curator for USOPC since June 2020. An article/post [on the TeamUSA website](#) notes that while she originally wanted to be an academic librarian, she found her "true interest" in special museum collections an archives, interning at the USOPC, with a post from her alma mater [saying in May 2018](#) that she was assisting "the archives with selecting artifacts to appear in the U.S. Olympic Museum."

McGrory said that the USOPC archives is unique in holding “more physical artifacts than traditional archives...[and] until the opening of the museum we didn’t have a place to view them,” with the opening of the USOPC allowing for the public to see their artifacts, with the archives request-only up to this point. She noted how the records told stories of “some of the lesser-known athletes” and her desire to make the collection fairer, with the challenges of finding Para history, but that she is “working to add some artifacts to bring to the collection.” Usually, archivists don’t have a spotlight in the media like she did, which is why I highlighted it. Doing this work all by herself could be exhausting and demoralizing, and the below video about her work at the [Crawford Family U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Archives](#) does imply that she is working with others, although she may be doing the brunt of the work.

<https://youtu.be/YZYFovQ2mv8>

Other than the post by Cross and the article about McGrory, there was a meme about [the struggles](#) with digitizing records, Andrew Warland asking whether auto-generated topic cards [are the future for record aggregation](#), Maarja Krusten [telling the story](#) of Sam Anthony, the Special Assistant to the Archivist, who died from terminal cancer on August 20, the value of exhibits in archives and special collections [which “function](#) as an important outreach tool” for some repositories, Daniel Dancis, a Textual Records Archivist at NARA, [writing about](#) finding posters within photographs, and the National Archives of Australia being given money [to “help further preserve](#) the Commonwealth’s aging records,” especially records at risk, and digitize them. Other stories focused on the re-opening of the Alabama Veterans Museum & Archives [which will expand](#) the size of the museum, and the Georgia Archives [introducing](#) new online research tools. I was also interested [in a thread](#) by Cross about archival labor in pop culture, noting that her blog exists to highlight what the media gets wrong about work of archivists and purpose of archives, with a major sin being absence of archival labor. It’s a Twitter thread worth reading.

Cross notes that actual work of archivists is often absent, protagonists seem smart enough to do research on their own, archivists are never shown helping people, no mention of who processes materials, “created the indices, the finding aids, the websites.” As a result, there is a skewed conception of “how archives and libraries actually work,” with historians declaring they “discovered” something, leading to “unnecessary expectations” hoisted upon archivists and archival institutions, and the idea of an archivist having “an infinite well of knowledge.” She says that archival labor is important, providing information for protagonists, and asks that creative people should “show them some love or at least acknowledge their existence.” This thread inspired my friend to write the next part of their [Steamland Chronicles series](#) with a non-binary archivist (and protagonist), named Mx. Lawlor, and they contemplate whether a new archives should be created after the destruction of the archives in the last section. The story is still in the very early stages, but my friend says they are excited to continue it, and keep improving it.

We then come to libraries. I’m excited to [nominate something for the National Film Registry!](#) Each year 25 films that are “culturally, historically or aesthetically” significant, and are at least 10 years old, are chosen by the Librarian of Congress, with advice from the National Film Preservation Board. They are currently encouraging recommendations of “a full range of

American films...[and] films representing the vibrant diversity of cultures and influences of filmmakers." Already 800 motion pictures have been selected, and you can nominate up to 50 films through the [online nomination form](#) with the deadline being September 15! In other library-related news, Jennifer Snoek-Brown of *Reel Librarians* [wrote about](#) her return to the fight club podcast, again noting the role of librarians in a smattering of horror films, from 1958-1996, and on Wong's cameos in *Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings*, [in a "first impressions" post](#) which is less detailed without the possibility of pausing a film, taking notes, or rewatching scenes, and the fifth time she "analyzed a reel librarian, library, or archives scene in a Marvel movie."

Those who work for the Library of Congress are very prolific, so it's hard to fit every single one of them into a newsletter. However, apart from the [retiring of John Y. Cole](#), historian of the Library of Congress and former director of the Library's Center for the Book, who began working at the library in 1966, there were posts about [Vatican criminal law and money laundering](#), [textiles of the early Americas](#), [the magic](#) of making books, [voices](#) of enslaved peoples, some of the many LGBTQ+ writers who have "helped pave the way for the celebrations today through [their contributions](#) to the copyright record," [portraits and narratives](#) of formerly enslaved peoples, and 2021 LOC Junior Fellow Sean DiLeonardi [noting](#) how he realized he belonged at the library. NYPL shared views from their digital collections [of the Brooklyn Bridge](#) and the purpose of maps, which [can be for many purposes](#), including "wayfinding, or locating oneself and navigating from place to place." The IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions) [released](#) a statement on Hungarian LGBTQ+ content laws, the Toronto Public Library had a post [about](#) preserving an old book, *In These Times* [focused on](#) the Abolitionist Library Association, which I talked about in an earlier newsletter, and *Programming Librarian* [reported on](#) the Jaffrey Public Library in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, having a "virtual conversation...on gender identity," hosted by the library director!

Then there's April Hathcock, who gets mentioned at least once in each of my newsletters. She has [a post](#) in May 2017 about resilience in the library field, even with the "abysmally low pay" in the profession. She said the obsession with resilience in the field plays a "huge part in destroying our attempts at increasing diversity" with grit keeping "libraries underfunded...staff underpaid...[and] work undervalued," as people wear grit like a medal of honor. She added that resilience "absolves those with privilege of the responsibility for dismantling oppression and erecting systems of equity," concluding that this obsession must end, and that we "have to accept the possibility of failure," with cutting of services, closing of libraries, no matter the tragedy. She quotes a fellow librarian who says that people should practice resistance rather than resilience. This connects to what I said about McGrory earlier, in that she is positioning herself as the resilient one, when she should have a full team of people helping her instead of her doing most of the work.

That brings me to genealogy. There is the disconcerting news about Ancestry [gobbling up](#) a French genealogy company, Geneanet, along with genealogists talking about [correcting names](#) in the site's German databases, [free online](#) New Jersey birth records and indexes, a century-old murder [unveiled](#) through genealogy work, and [the role of narrative](#) as an avenue for critically unpacking family history. There are entries for Zachariah Packard and Nathan Packard in

[Beyond Kin's Enslaved Population Research Directory](#), [the kinds](#) of ancestor death records you should look for, [Genealogy Star](#) on the status all of the records [on the FamilySearch website](#), [tips](#) for organizing your genealogical information, and a genealogist encouraging people to “[look more closely](#) at their own relatives who suffered from disabilities.” All of that is interesting, but what really caught my eye was [Gabrielle Bellot's review](#) of Jen Manion's 2020 book, [Female Husbands: A Trans History](#), who says that Manion “accepts that it is not always possible to know a historical person's gender identity, so when it seems uncertain, Manion uses gender-neutral terminology – a move at once politic and political, doing gender justice to historical figures whose identities are unclear or who may have genuinely wished to be spoken of in non-binary terms.” That is something that matters when it comes to genealogy, as there may be certain ancestors whose gender is a bit of a quandary for one reason or another, so we should not assume anything about them. That's the main takeaway. I'm excited to read this book in the future and think it could influence my genealogy work.

<https://youtu.be/2nkjm02mb4M>

With that is the subject of history. *Smithsonian* magazine had posts about Hurricane Ida [damaging Whitney Plantation](#), the only Louisiana museum to focus on the enslaved, Italian authorities [recovering antiquities](#) worth \$13 million, archaeologists [unearthing](#) a 2,800 year old castle in Eastern Turkey, how the obsession of Medieval Europeans with pointy shoes [led to painful bunions](#), excavations on Big Talbot Island [possibly unearthing](#) “traces of Saraby, a 16th- or 17th-century Mocama community,” and uncovering a gold ornament [in a German tomb](#) which is over 3,800 years old. Other articles talked about the movie palaces which made viewers “[feel like they were watching royalty](#),” something which Hollywood encouraged, with a few large studios producing and distributing movies across the country, with stars under contracts that “essentially controlled their lives,” while the studios has control of “every aspect of movie production and distribution.” The Baby Boom led to the demise of movie palaces, flourishing from the 1920s to 1950s, with the nuclear family becoming front and center, as “people wanted to raise their children in the suburbs.” Other articles focused on the young anti-war activists [who fought for school free speech](#) in what became the *Tinker v. Des Moines* case, and a new study finding that many feathered dinosaurs were [more aerodynamic](#) than previously thought.

As always, there are articles which don't neatly fit into the categories of archives, libraries, genealogy, or history. Margaret Middleton [gave tips](#) on gender inclusive visitor signs at museums, *ZDNET* noted [how fast](#) a password leaked on the web will be tested by hackers, *Quartz* explained that companies are [rethinking](#) plans of slashing office space which had been proposed earlier in the pandemic, *Popular Mechanics* explained the value of the [world's smallest](#) implantable chip, and *Smithsonian* magazine said that extreme floods are, due to climate change, [more likely](#) in Europe. *The Conversation* noted on India's plan to pay journal subscription fees which [may make](#) science harder to access, *The Fuzzy Librarian* [noted](#) seven spots for free audiobooks, and *Gizmodo* explained that cops are using Facebook [to target](#) Line 3 Pipeline protesters. Then there's Sarah Ahmed's *Complaint!*, a book [which “examines](#) what we can learn about power from those who complain about abuses of power.” As always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. [One lampoons](#) those complaining about “critical race theory,” another [talks to](#) history of the rainbow flag, one is about [moving past](#) expectations you hoist on

yourself from her parents. Others are about [what you can learn](#) while suffering a gender-nonconforming crisis in folk dancing class, the Supreme Court's [awful decision](#) on abortion, making fun of [COVID-19 deniers](#), and a containment being put upon the dome [on a pipeline](#) after Hurricane Ida caused an oil spill... just like with Deepwater Horizon.

That's all for this week! Hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Archival silence, racism in fandom spaces, book preservation, Biden's slaveowning ancestors, a failing White genealogist, and the woman who created "Monopoly"

There's a lot of ground to cover since last week's newsletter and this week I write a great deal about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and other topics. Enjoy!

*[Newsletter originally published [on September 19, 2021](#)]*



*Luz researching in the Bonesborough Public Library in an episode of The Owl House ("Through the Looking Glass Ruins")*

Good afternoon, all! I hope you are all doing well. In the past week, I [published a post](#) about an unnamed librarian in a webcomic I like, and found out about a film named *The Watermelon Woman*. This 1996 mockumentary is the first feature film directed by a filmmaker, Cheryl Dunne, who is a Black lesbian, and is, of course, about Black lesbians. I [was intrigued](#) when one site described the film as focusing on "how black queer actors and stories were often ignored and how navigating archival records in attempts to look for those stories can be

excruciating,” thinking it could shine a light on [archival silence](#). Although some described the film’s archivist, played by Sarah Schulman, as flustered, said that she “displays little respect for the fragile nature of audio-visual archiving” (that can’t be good) and a “humorless, borderline fascist” who is part of a feminist archive collective, cheekily named the “Center for Lesbian Information and Technology,” I’m still interested in watching the film. If *The Watermelon Woman* seems poignant enough in terms of connections to archival concepts, which I’m expecting it will, I’ll likely submit an article to *The American Archivist Reviews Portal* on the subject. That’s my plan. With that, onto the rest of my newsletter, which Substack is telling me is “[too long for email](#).”

This week there’s a lot of archives-related news. My work colleague [Lauren Harper](#) asked “does anyone know if NARA has done any larger studies on the impact of CC on their facilities?” after seeing a notice that NARA’s Access to Archival Databases system was offline (it’s [now online](#)) because of flooding at their network provider. That is a question I’m not sure how to answer, but anyone that does know should respond to Lauren about that. She [also urged](#) Biden to not let the clock run out on what she called “critical transparency fixes.” On a totally different subject, I read an article by a Black woman, Stitch, with interest. She asked where Archives of Our Own(AO3)/Organization of Transformative Works (OTW) [is when it comes to anti-racism](#), saying AO3 continues to be a “space that will do more to protect racist fanworks and the racists that create them than fans of color,” with those who report racist fics getting brushed off by the Abuse team, and saying that the site still “protects racists in fandom...[and] punishes people of color that dare to speak up about racism in fanworks and from fellow fan[s].” She goes on to say that even Twitter had a better response than OTW and AO3, and hopes that in the future, there will be a stronger offensive content policy. Although she recognizes AO3 as a hosting platform and for the work it does for “incorporating old archives of fannish work,” she says that she will not be holding her breath when it comes to AO3/OTW engaging in any anti-racist action against racist fanworks or racism in fandom spaces. This article really hit home for me as a person who reads AO3 fan fics. I’m encouraged to recommend writers to place a notice atop their stories supporting her proposed changes.

There are some fascinating recent NARA blogposts. The first of these [tells the story](#) of a Black man, Ben “Bennie” Reeves, who was later incarcerated at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. Others are about how the National Archives at Philadelphia [is situated](#) on the ancestral lands of Lenape, [the enslaved women](#) of Confederate nitre works, Charles Michelson’s [campaign against](#) Herbert Hoover, and that the Federal Records Center in Fort Worth is “situated on lands that [are rich in the history](#) of numerous indigenous peoples.” *The American Archivist*, for its part, had articles about [re-imagining instruction](#) in special collections and [providing restricted access](#) to mental health archives. The *Washington Post* [talked about](#) the closing of the Minnesota Tobacco Document Depository, an archive which revealed many secrets about Big Tobacco, with many of the documents [online currently](#) and the physical copies will be destroyed, which is bad archival practice. Margot Note [outlined](#) strategies for archival advocacy, the Library of Congress (LOC) noted that Nicole Saylor who “led a team of archivists, ethnomusicologists and folklorists that curates the nation’s largest ethnographic archives,” the American Folklife Center, from 2012 to this year, is [moving to a new position](#) as head of LOC’s Digital Innovation Lab.

There is also some news about libraries and the library field. I liked reading [the guest post](#) by two virtual Preservation Research and Testing Division interns (Kimberly Chancellor and Heidi Vance), at LOC, trying to prevent paper deterioration as part of the ongoing database which is assessing the physical condition of books from “five large research libraries in distinct regions of the United States.” This project will [ultimately “objectively assess](#) the condition of the books held in the United States,” with a representative sample from those five research libraries. Beyond that internship, [Tania M. Ríos Marrero](#), 2021 Junior Fellow at LOC, was interviewed, about her work with the Farm Security Administration photographs of Puerto Rico, which is “one of the largest visual archives of mid-twentieth century Puerto Rico,” and her work on the Library’s web archiving initiatives, [selecting and nominating](#) sites for preservation. Other posts examined Native claims settlement acts, described as [a “somewhat complex area](#) of U.S. indigenous law,” noted that [two new research guides](#) about Latin American composers have been published, and a new collaboration between LOC and Harvard University [on Islamic law collections](#). Other articles argued for [people to support libraries](#) in Scotland (for those living there), [the reasons](#) libraries are “awesome,” the [role that Black librarians play](#) in the Indianapolis community, and Dine College being the first tribal college to grant [“faculty status to their librarians.”](#) There were an assortment of other articles about a program in Hawaii County to [loan out ukuleles](#), [preserving](#) computer and video games, on how library fires [have often](#) been tragedies (no shock there), the Schaumburg Library [having](#) an exhibit which explores “implicit bias to help us all become aware of our own bias,” the [impact](#) of Hoopla borrows on libraries, publishers, and creators, [and how](#) Controlled Digital Lending can unlock a library’s full potential.

<https://youtu.be/07dFEtj1S4>

This past week, there was one story that really caught my attention. It wasn’t the appointing of Amazon and Facebook executives [to the board](#) of Ancestry, Inc. (they are all in the same club), or the California Information Privacy Act [heading to](#) the desk of Governor Newsom, but rather the ancestry of Joe Biden. The Winter edition of *American Ancestors* [had an authoritative genealogy](#) on him, called an “Ancestor Table,” authored by two White male genealogists: Alexander Bannerman and Gary Boyd Roberts. However, Bannerman [recently told a Politico reporter](#) that “some of Biden’s ancestors enslaved people,” specifically Marylanders Jesse Robinett and Thomas Randle, using census records to make this clear. That isn’t really much of a surprise, but what disturbed me was the fact this was NOT included in the “authoritative” genealogy in *American Ancestors* because it was “common for Americans with colonial-era roots on the continent to have ancestors who enslaved people.” Strangely, Biden’s distant tie to the wife of Jefferson Davis, Varina Anne Banks Howell, was pointed out, but NOT his connections to slaveowning ancestors, even though Jefferson Davis owned [as many as 113 people](#). Bannerman said Biden’s ties to slavery were modest, declaring there was “not a lot of ancestors, and not a lot of slaves.” The *Politico* article never followed up on the implications of what Bannerman was saying, only noting that Mitch McConnell and Beto O’Rourke also had slaveowning ancestors and said something that White people don’t like to hear: “tens of millions of Americans have ancestral ties to enslavers or the Confederacy.” The article then stated that this could be “a political problem” for Biden and noted that Bannerman did not confirm that Biden had slave-owning ancestors until after the election.

I have some serious issues with Bannerman's logic. His justification for excluding slaveowners from genealogy is laughable. Why should that information not be mentioned? Does it really matter whether the number of humans your ancestor had in bondage were "modest" or not? If I went by Bannerman's logic, then I should have never written about my slave-owning ancestors either, since those they had in bondage would be considered "modest" from his perspective. Furthermore, his argument does not reflect well on genealogy itself, especially White genealogists. Taken to its extreme, his argument would invalidate the need for Black genealogy in the first place, even though more diverse genealogy from those other than White people is sorely needed.

There are other issues, like Snopes claiming that Thomas Randle's slaveowning was "unproven" (their claim [was later changed](#) to true) but it is disturbing, but not at all surprising, to see this argument come from [a well-educated White male genealogist](#). His co-writer, a Senior Research Scholar Emeritus of the New England Historic Genealogical Society, which publishes *American Ancestors*, is [also a White man](#) and once had a Wikipedia article which [was deleted](#) for not being "notable" enough. He may also have a similar opinion. And if they aren't including Biden's enslaved ancestors in their "authoritative" genealogy, what else is being excluded? Can this "Ancestor Table" even be considered "authoritative" at all?

On a related subject were articles on Irish national education sources [relating to the 19th century](#), the [top "social history" websites](#), [a sample](#) research plan, five genealogy systems to [keep you organized](#), and the continuing [challenge of immigrant research](#) with a short Q&A with frequently asked questions. I found a post by Pauleen Cass about [how you decide](#) what should be kept "as part of the family archive, what needs to be recycled, and what can be culled entirely" as helpful. The same can be said about James Tanner [explaining incorrect changes](#) made to family trees on FamilySearch. He argued that genealogists should not "make a change unless you absolutely know what you are doing." Donna Moughty, on the other hand, [noted how](#) to find women in your family tree. Alison Spring [makes](#) a valid point that a "whole new route of ancestral exploration can be opened up if you know what your relative's occupation was." I've experienced that first-hand, through my genealogy research up to this point, so this is a completely valid argument. Judith Batchelor [had a great post](#) about finding information about ancestors with blindness and deafness, suggesting that people look more into such ancestors as part of their family histories, and conducting a deep dive into some of her ancestors. There were also posts about [the history](#) of Irish people in India, [what can be found](#) in an Irish birth record, [the purpose](#) of indexing genealogy records, [tips](#) for a family history research trip, and how poor research [leaves](#) a permanent error on a family tree, especially when people do not understand naming practices and declare fictitious middle names of their ancestors.

That brings me to history. *The Metropole*, the blog of the Urban History Association, [had a post](#) about Black space, agency, and community building in the Jim Crow South. Davis Dunavin of WSHU [talked about](#) the Garden State, and the "secret behind the monopoly board." The predecessor to Monopoly was patented in 1904 by Elizabeth Magie and was called the Landlord's Game. She used it to "promote an economic ideology called Georgism, named after Henry George, a 19th-century economist and social reformer," with the idea that land should belong equally to everyone. Although the game spread across the country, with people making

changes along the way to make it easier to play with their kids, she never got credit for making Monopoly's predecessor, even Parker Brothers denying her role. The article also said that Atlantic City changed since the Monopoly game debuted in 1934, with casinos moving in during the 1970s, and some said that the board itself is a "record of Atlantic City's history of segregation." Quoted in the article is an archivist who works [at the Atlantic City Free Public Library: Jacqueline Silver-Morillo](#). *Perspectives on History* and *Smithsonian* magazine had articles on topics such as [documenting disaster](#), a [monastery run](#) by an early medieval queen in England, human remains showing a battle-to-the-death [by farmers in Chile](#), [how to give](#) a virtual book talk, [noting that](#) everything has a history, and a snapshot at the public's [view on history](#). Other than this was a post on Medgar Evers' [role in civil rights law](#), [the value](#) of steampunk for historians, a professor [uncovering](#) new information about the ties of Jane Austen's family to slavery, an interview with Dr. Marcia Chatelain [on fast food history](#), and articles in the *Journal of the American Revolution*. That publication focused on the articles of Massachusetts in [1774](#), [the 2nd Connecticut Regiment](#) at Edge Hill, the [Battle of East Guilford](#), the final engagement in Connecticut, in May 1782, and the story of a donkey, a suit, and a quixote [for George Washington](#).

[https://youtu.be/BnDf\\_F02B\\_w](https://youtu.be/BnDf_F02B_w)

Then we get to a number of articles which aren't specifically about archives, libraries, genealogy, or history. *The Artifice* had posts about [the storytelling layers](#) of literary merit and [the ambiguous morality](#) of Oedipus Rex's locastē. Smithsonian Libraries and Archives noted their extensive collection [of two million volumes](#) "in subjects ranging from art to zoology and forty-four thousand cubic feet of archival records that chronicle the growth and development of the Smithsonian throughout its history." Crooked has a podcast on [how "the far right is using Native children](#) to attack American Indian tribes and advance a conservative agenda," the *Chronicle of Higher Education* has a philosopher [explain the best way](#) to "do public humanities," and Chinese Progressive Association and Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus noted that workers at a popular restaurant in San Francisco's Chinatown (Z & Y) [won a \\$1.6 billion dollar settlement for wage theft](#). Also of note were articles [on why](#) helical seashells resemble spiraling galaxies and the human heart, the significance [of graffiti art](#), why companies [keep folding](#) to copyright pressure, that although earthquakes and storms are natural, "Haiti's disasters [are man-made, too](#)," and [pointing out](#) the slow pace of correcting errors in scientific publishing while papers are published rapidly, especially when it comes to COVID-19 research. The latter calls for a formal process to catch mistakes in scientific papers. *Smithsonian* magazine had articles on [truth behind](#) some unsettling works of art about human impact on the planet, the discovery of [the world's smallest dinosaur](#), a study [suggesting that](#) 150 years may be the upper limit of the human lifespan, how millions of microscopic fly carcasses [left dark stains](#) on people's feet at New England beaches, and [the extinction event](#) which almost wiped sharks out of existence.

Finally, there's illustrations in *The Nib*. Some made a good point, [like a cow declaring](#) that "maybe humans should regulate their beef intake instead of my poop," in response to [the MooLoo, paranoia and accusations abound](#) in the far right, "[horse sense](#)" for pandemics, a story of how NYPD's police union is [suing over](#) a vaccine mandate, methods to try and get [rid of tax](#)

[havens, similarities](#) between corporate work and prostitution (both are selling your body), and how anti-regulation attitudes [ruled the “world of food”](#) before the FDA. There were others [illustrating](#) human destructiveness of the Earth (if we treated our homes like we do the Earth), Afghans [reacting to the U.S. presence](#) in Afghanistan from their own perspective, [the cognitive](#) dissonance of supporters of the former president, unemployment benefits [expiring](#) without any push back from Biden, a time traveler [failing to stop](#) the war in Afghanistan, and last, but not least, one about Eric Clapton’s new single [voicing](#) his anti-vaccine sentiment (some say [it appears](#) to be a musical rant against pandemic restrictions and vaccines”) and racist comments [in 1976](#), calling England a “white country” made “for white people” ([he says](#) he has since changed).

That’s all for this week. Until next week! Hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# NARA's "Harmful Language Alert," knowledge collaboration, deflating FamilySearch's mass digitization announcement, and the importance of critical consumption of media

Happy Sunday! This week I'll cover pressing archives, library, genealogy, and history-related news, while summarizing articles on related subjects

*[Newsletter originally published [on September 26, 2021](#)]*



Sound advice from Kaoru-sama in *Dear Brother*, a classic 1990s anime

I hope you are all doing well! People responded on Twitter to my comment about the White male genealogist Alexander Bannerman who dismissed Biden's slaveowning roots as non-important, in last week's newsletter, an interview with a *Politico* reporter. [AncestorsAlive](#) called

Bannerman's argument, "disgusting. NOT history, NOT genealogy...just lies." [BlackProGen](#) stated, "what was the point of dropping that info [that Biden has slaveowners] to the press but not doing due diligence to trace their descendants and tell us more about THEM?! Clickbait." A genealogist, [Valorie](#), made the best point of all: "All of our history is important. If we hide parts because they are now seen (rightfully) as shameful, we are failing to tell the whole truth. How can we dismantle the system of racism without all the truth?" On Tuesday I [published a short article](#) about representations of librarians in stock photos and gifs, and after a back-and-forth with a librarian, it turned out they just didn't like one of the sites I chose. Fancy that. The same day I [got the news](#) that I'm a new member of the Steering Committee of Issues & Advocacy, a SAA Section! So excited! With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter. It is, again, "too long for email," which means you'll have to open it [in] your web browsers to read the whole newsletter, as it will be cut short, especially if you are reading this on a Gmail account.

There's been a lot of chatter about archives this week. It was mostly related to a "Harmful Language Alert" on the NARA Catalog. Some folks with reactionary opinions like Sen. James Lankford, for instance, jumped on this when they saw that it was on the pages of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, declaring that "the left" was trying to censor/sully the documents. The reality can't be further from the truth, as that warning appears on [ALL the pages](#) of the catalog, [not those of specific records](#). Admittedly, the content warning could have a better name, but I think having the warning is a promising idea and should be supported. It is a result from the racism task force which I wrote about [on June 19, 2021](#), and the full description of the warning is described [here](#). NARA was right to point out that the warning is there because "the Catalog contains content that [may be difficult to view](#)," specifically [referring to the "photos](#) and documents relating to war, slavery, lynching, KKK, and other topics." I wrote a short thread about this, available [here](#), and there is a thread between myself, Maarja Krusten, and Alexia D. Puravida, for those interested, [here](#).

If I'd have to guess, the same people who are complaining about this warning are fine with the MPAA's film rating system, the FCC's TV Parental Guidelines, the RIAA's Parental Advisory label, the DC Comics rating system, the Marvel Comics rating system, or the ESRB's video game ratings, along with many other [content ratings](#), which can be relatively comprehensive [at times](#), or [intrusive](#) (in the case of internet filters). After all, the Telecommunications Act of 1996 which called for, [in section 551\(b\)](#), a television rating code with "identification of...programming that contains sexual, violent, or other incident [sic] material," passed in a bipartisan manner in [the Senate](#) (also see [here](#)) and [the House](#). NARA's Harmful Language Alert is different. Unlike the above noted labels, codes, and ratings, which are socially conservative efforts to control content, this alert is the result, as noted earlier, of the Archivist's Task Force on Racism Report, released in June 2021, the same month the "Harmful Language Alert" was published, and the page for the alert was published in July. It is part of what NARA describes as an effort toward "[reparative description and digitization](#)", something which is sorely needed.

There is archives news beyond NARA's alert. My work colleagues at NSA, Malcolm Byrne and Kian Byrne, [wrote about](#) forty years of U.S.-Iran relations, full with "antagonism, distrust, and frustration," from a new volume of declassified documents! I read this week about ways that "records and recordkeeping are "bound up" in experiences of loss and grieving," [from November](#)

[2019](#), and reflections from Samantha Thomas [on letters](#) about profound loss. The Crossville, Tennessee paper, *Crossville Chronicle* wrote about the Cumberland County Commission committee [considering](#) a former bank as [a place for an archives](#), while [some talked](#) about the *Seattle Gay News* archives, 10,000 volumes at a religious archives and records center [in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania](#), and a [new project](#) to make Pittsburgh's City Archive more accessible to the public. Apart from this, the *Montgomery Independent* noted that Alabama Department of Archives and History [continued its Food for Thought series](#), with a guest that talked about some of the favorite drinks of Southerner, Knox County Archives [received](#) a national award for its preservation efforts, and an article about looking beyond "traditional written archives to [a rich array of sources](#) that can help to widen the scope of research." Welcome to the newest member of the College and University Archives Section's Steering Committee, [Tiffany Cole](#).

*Displaced Voices* focused on the Twentieth Century Histories of Civic Society [Responses to Crises of Displacement](#), Emily Judd of the Princeton Library [talked](#) on virtual teaching with special collections, with history professor Martha A. Sandweiss quoted as saying rightly "archives are created by people with points of view," and Andrew Dunning of Bodleian Libraries Centre for the Study of the Book [noted open-access Bodleian publications](#) on HathiTrust. Emma Esperon, Archivist, and Aliza Leventhal, Head, Technical Services, Prints & Photographs Division, both of the Library of Congress, [blog on creating finding aids](#) in an effort to enhance access. Apart from the Dance Music Archive, said to be the "[world's biggest archive](#) of electronic music and culture," Margaret Long of History Associates, disproved the [common misconception](#) that archives "house mainly papers and books of the well-to-do or influential deceased," and Maarja Krusten [noted the value](#) of creating "where we can share the joy or pain of learning something new, about ourselves and about the lives of others," noting past blogs by Meredith, Lance Stuchell, and Kate Theimer. NARA blogs, spoke on [the saga](#) of the Hoover Dam, the [children's hour by FDR](#), and [records](#) of the Patent and Trademark Office.

On a related note is April Hathcock's post proposing [a feminist framework](#) for radical knowledge collaboration, with three main questions: How has the patriarchy affected you? How has the patriarchy impacted your work? How have you been complicit in perpetuating the patriarchy? Hathcock goes on to say this evolved "into a framework for thinking through equitable collaboration in knowledge work," with a focus centering on the "radical empowerment of the collective and the dismantling of oppressive systems and practices." This connects with an ethic of care/ethical approach, intersectional lens, inclusion, importance of repatriation, and many additional principles, and knowledge work such as developing anti-oppressive description and metadata. Will such principles be used in archival contexts? Only time will tell.



Librarian assisting two women at the information desk of the 42nd Street Library, September 1944, [via /r/Libraries](#). What wild coats!

With that, let me talk about libraries. LOC blogs focused on many topics, such as [a review](#) of *So Many Islands: Stories from the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Indian, and Pacific Oceans*, the Rock Springs Massacre [in 1885](#), how to [view a “hefty set](#) of search results in the Prints & Photographs Online Catalog,” some of the Outstanding [Women of Arsia Press](#), and new [research guides available online](#) on musicals and music, along with posts on specific topics such as [The Okeh Laughing Record \(1922\)](#), and [Phonautograms \(c. 1853-61\)](#). I enjoyed reading the five questions and answers from the 2021 LOC Junior Fellow, [Joseph A. Torres-González](#), and a LOC Junior Fellow working with the Digital Resources Division on the Foreign Legal Gazettes, [Joseph Kolodrubetz](#). It was great to hear that Jason Reynolds [will continue](#) to be National Ambassador for Young People’s Literature for a third year. NYPL had posts about historical fiction [set in New York City](#) and [the Riot Grrrl revolution](#). [Programming Librarian](#) [noted](#) the value of librarian skills of outreach and marketing. Margery Bayne [outlined](#) the not-so-hidden-secrets of public libraries for booklovers. Paul Kelly wrote in [Code4Lib](#) [about improving the lives](#) of metadata creators with natural language processing. I’d also like to wish Jennifer Snoek-Brown’s *Reel Librarians* a [happy ten year anniversary](#)! Compare that to my *Libraries in Popular Culture* blog which has been around since [July 26, 2020](#), so I wish Snoek-Brown the best on their blogging.

This week there was a lot of genealogy-related news. [On September 22](#), Arelis Hernández, reporter for *The Washington Post* talked about an Ancestry DNA test she did and found that she is 50% Mexican Indigenous, more specifically Chichimeca,” adding she is interested in learning, upon her retirement Nahuatl, “the language of the Aztecs and also the Chichimeca and those folks that live there, and it’s still very much spoken now.” The day before, [FamilySearch celebrated](#) the milestone of digitizing 2.4 million rolls of microfilm, a massive project which took 15 years, which was supposed to take 50-100 years to complete. James Tanner [clarified](#) that while this is incredible, a significant chunk of the records are “restricted in some way and...all these records are not indexed and searchable from the FamilySearch.org Historical Records Collection,” meaning that many records “still show up as still being on microfilm.”

Paul Chiddicks wrote about his ancestors in [the First World War](#) and [favorite genealogy podcast](#), while some [had posts](#) on genealogy-related humor, the unfolding of Black history [over time](#), 101 genealogy websites [worth checking out](#), and the [Great Buchanan inheritance hoax](#). *Smithsonian* magazine explained a new study suggesting that Japan’s modern populations trace their ancestry to “three distinct groups, not two as previously proposed,” [from DNA tests](#), history of farming ancestors [in Upper Canada](#), [how misspellings](#) of names can throw you off, and *Genealogy* magazine focused on an opt topic these days: [interpreting others’ direct-to-consumer genetic ancestry results](#).

That brings me to history. *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about a Vincent Van Gogh drawing [going on view](#), revealed photos and [documents of indigenous culture](#) in 1920s Alaska, camel sculptures in Saudi Arabia [which are](#) older than the Pyramids in Giza and Stonehenge, a [baroque masterpiece](#), and mass graves [revealing the brutality](#) of medieval warfare. There were articles in the magazine focused on the “great book scare” [from the 1870s and 1890s](#) when people thought that books spread diseases, which was disproven, new research suggesting [that some Europeans](#) who died of the bubonic plague were “individually interred with care,” a new species of giant rhino [excavated in China](#), and [archaeologists revealing](#) the world’s first military memorial. There were also articles on the French scientist, André Michaux, who [courted Thomas Jefferson](#), and the scandal he got pulled into, the [sensational murder](#) case that ended in an incorrect conviction, [asking](#) what Stonehenge sounds like, making clear [why Black histories matter](#), and the [incredible story](#) of Hercules Mulligan, a spy and businessman in Manhattan during the Revolutionary War.



*Fry considers how to defeat the big brain, and others in its fleet, which threatens to destroy all humanity by collecting all thoughts and ideas, in the February 2001 *Futurama* episode “The Day the Earth Stood Stupid”*

Then there are stories that don't as easily fit into the earlier parts of this newsletter. Stitch, who I mentioned in last week's newsletter, [recently argued](#) that critical reading and thinking should be part of how people engage with source media and fanworks, and how that work is created. She added that even if there is a problem with a fandom or media doesn't mean you should never interact with it again, saying if you can understand where criticism is coming from, you can dodge that, provide effective tags and notes, then redirect criticism which comes from a certain direction. She also argued that media literacy is important, as it will help you become “a better fan, a better creator, and a better person,” noting a few resources at the bottom of her post.

Putting aside the free online [Critical Consumption course](#), and the list by family-friendly and generally socially conservative Common Sense Media, which sneers at any animations with “violence” or “bad role models” and once even wrote a racist review of *Steven Universe* according to the recent/last *Steven Universe* art book, on critical thinking and evaluating media, Jason Loviglio and Jenny O’Grady [in UMBC Magazine](#) write on how one can critically consume media. They suggest following the money, checking your facts, checking your priorities, and talking out a story. That is much better advice than the well-intentioned feel-good measures proposed by [a pamphlet](#) from the National Eating Disorders Association, which states that to be

a critical viewer, recognize that media images and messages are not reflections of reality, the purpose of ads, talk back to the TV if you see a bad ad, write letters to advertisers to promote better messages, and write letters to companies promoting bad messages.

Fiza Baloch [wrote in \*The Sheaf\*](#) that you should ask questions, check facts, and be wary of specific outlets, applying the same to streaming shows, be critical of what you are watching, while Brette Bliss [wrote on how to consume media carefully and critically](#). She declared that “not all media is evil,” and doesn’t have an agenda, saying it has the job to “inform and sometimes dissent,” adding that you should look at the advertisers, who/what the message is for, who could be hurt by the message, the company’s track record, different sides of the story, what other sources say, your thoughts, continuing to be informed and political, and to “be a responsible citizen, defend your arguments, know what you value, and know your news sources.” I have to disagree with Bliss that media doesn’t have an agenda, because it can, and does, have an agenda, and a perspective, especially when comes to so-called “enemies” of the U.S., and more broadly African, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries, and pushing for, at minimum, in the U.S., for continued support of imperial actions, shaped by the societal power structure which they are part and parcel of, without a doubt. That is something Bliss is ignoring and/or downplaying.

In the past week I also read articles about [the growing movement](#) to share science through quilting, [the darker aspects](#) of the rebellion in *Star Wars*, [the development](#) of the queer movement in the South in 1988, the exam surveillance company Proctorio [suing critics](#) of its practices, and how AI [is making fake science worse](#). *The Nib* had illustrations about: [a ransomware](#) attack, casual or brutal death of children [shown casually](#) in films, lampooning COVID-19 deniers [with a focus](#) on deniers of Black Death, care workers [during the pandemic](#), and the faulty attacks [on critical race theory](#), to name a few.

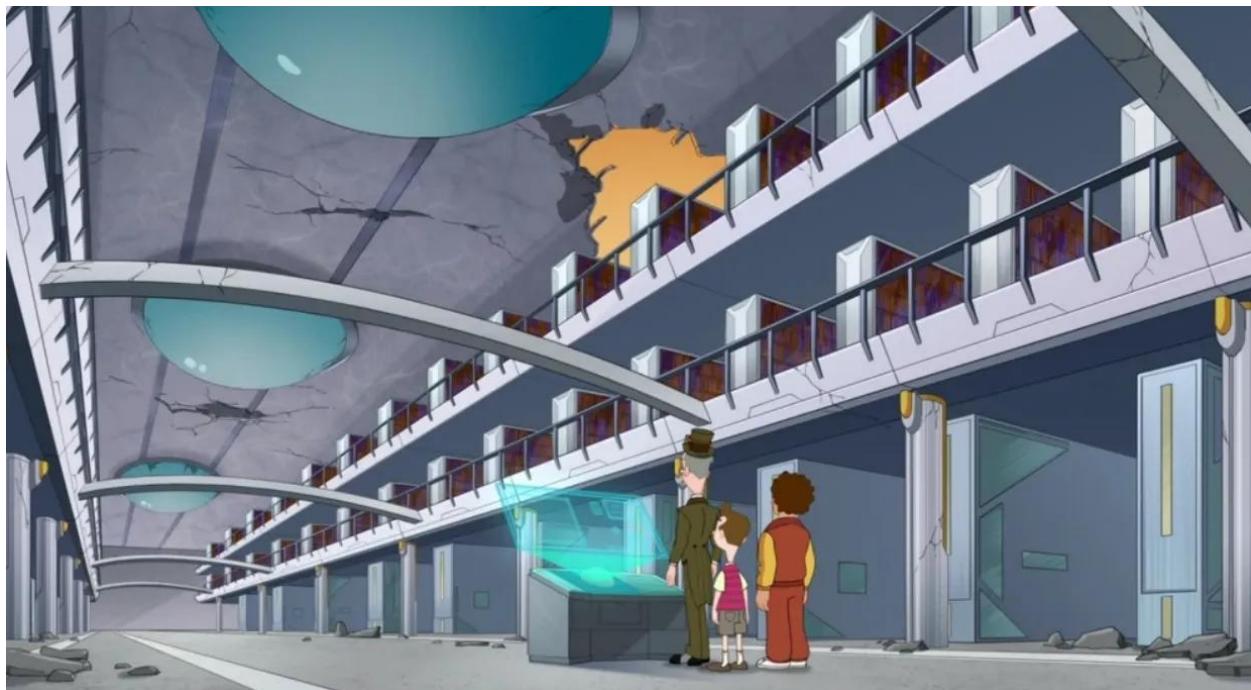
That's all for this week. I hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# NYT's transphobic "archival sanctity" defense, common archives and library cliches, Indigenous land acknowledgements, special libraries, and beyond

This week I'll be writing about the latest archives, library, genealogy, and history news, including articles about digitization and a few posts by April Hathcock

*[Newsletter originally published [on October 3, 2021](#)]*



*Futuristic library in the "Missing Milo" episode of Milo Murphy's Law. Outside this library it says "Quiet in the library please." This scene reminds me a bit of the digital library [in The Time Machine](#), although this library is different*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. This week, I had a discussion on Twitter with archivists about the recent episode of *What If...?* [which featured an archives](#), stereotypically of course, it [became a topic](#) of a back-and-forth dialogue between me and a number of other archivists. Without anything else to add in this introduction, let me move onto

the rest of my newsletter, which again has been labeled as “too long for email,” meaning it will be clipped in your inboxes.

There was a lot of chatter about archives this week. Jay Moschella, a curator and cataloger of rare books at the Boston Public Library, [noted](#) that when archives and libraries “run smoothly” and appear to be “simple,” it means that there has been “countless hours/days/weeks/years of labor” behind the scenes. In response, [some said](#) that administrators and users should understand this, while others [stated](#) that the organization is the “result of invisible, underpaid labor, mostly by women,” and that before 1960, the professions of teacher, nurse, and librarian were [“most readily available to women”](#) and as such were underpaid then, and are underpaid now. In other unrelated Twitter posts, some archivists [noted that they](#) arrange and describe personal fonds and [called out](#) the *New York Times* for resisting the removal of dead names of trans journalists, and having their correct/chosen names used instead, citing the so-called “sanctity of the archives” as a justification. In response to this NYT position, some [implied that the paper was hypocritical](#) as changes have been made in other instances, said that NYT does not, due to this policy, care about [the safety](#) of their employees, and [argued that](#) NYT does not know what they are talking about. Comments beyond this stated that NYT is using the “cultural record” to [excuse transphobia](#), said that changing the names of trans journalists [to remove](#) their dead names is “morally right,” described the notion of archival purity is [“complete horseshit,”](#) noted that the sanctity of archives [doesn’t exist](#), and [asserted](#) that people’s safety [is more important](#) than the archive.

On a totally different subject, on September 30, there was a discussion about common archives (and library) cliches, hosted by the SNAP Section. In that discussion I said that libraries [are bustling](#), not dying, noted [the hilarity](#) of Indiana Jones being considered an archivist by some, asserted that archival cliches cause more confusion [than anything else](#), and challenged [said cliches](#). Apart from my comments, Alexia Puravida pointed out that archival collections [become accessible due to “intervention](#) or mediation involved between collections, archivists, and researchers,” that materials are expensive, that archivists [are understaffed and devalued](#), and that [nothing about](#) archives is neutral. Others pointed out that libraries are [much more](#) than just books (as is often portrayed in animation), that librarians and archivists do more than track down books but [do tasks like coding](#), that archival work [is necessary](#), pointed to the [faultiness](#) of archival cliches, and stated that, without a doubt, library work [requires](#) constant interaction. Some pointed to, as I have on various blogs, that the library stereotype [is still strong](#), as it is [for archives](#), noted [the cliche](#) that archivists/librarians are “all introverted and socially awkward people,” and Rebecca Goldman provided [helpful flowchart comics](#) on archivists, internships, and more. There were additional comments, but these are some of the most pertinent posts worth noting.

There were several archives-related posts unconnected to the previously summarized Twitter posts. This included David Ferriero [noting](#) that the George W. Bush Presidential Library and Museum, in Dallas, is on the ancestral lands of the Wichita, Caddo, Comanche, Cherokee, Kickapoo, and Tawakoni peoples, while the Nixon Presidential Library, in Yorba Linda, California, is [on the “ancestral lands](#) of the Hotuuknga Tribe...a branch of the Tongva Nation,” and that the National Archives in New York City is [situated on the “ancestral lands](#) of the

Munsee Lenape peoples." Other than these acknowledgements of past occupancy of various lands by Indigenous peoples, NARA recently [noted the digitization of Civil War maps](#) from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and a tool to measure the digitization of collections donated to NARA. While a higher percentage of donated records have been digitized than those in record groups, for government records, according to [the tool](#), a larger number of government records have been digitized. 143,040,642 scans of government records are online, according to [the Record Group Explorer](#), as compared to 829,815 scans of donated records, as of September 2021. On a non-NARA related note, I loved reading [the recent interview](#) with Zakiya Collier, the Schomburg's new Digital Archivist, who curates and maintains digital collections which are focused on a different topics relating to Black life and culture, using the tool [Archive-It](#) to archive web content.



*Black children secure books at a North Carolina Albemarle Region bookmobile stop in January 1950, via [North Carolina Digital Collections](#)*

There is a lot of library news this week. *USNI News* reported that in a "cost-saving effort," libraries on [some military bases](#) will be closed, *Book Riot* [wrote about](#) the impact of COVID-19 on library late fees, John McQuillen, the Associate Curator, Printed Books & Bindings at the Morgan Library & Museum, talked about finding writings of nuns which were previously

unknown [through the use of ultraviolet light](#), and the Internet Archive noted that Senator Ron Wyden and Representative Anna Eshoo [sent an “inquiry](#) to each of the “Big Five” book publishers to investigate their activities in the library e-book market.” Apart from this is a new Library of Congress (LOC) [guide on the Morrill Act](#) which “funded the establishment of public colleges by offering land grants to the states to develop or sell,” posts on various subjects, such as the [Sami Magna Carta](#) (also known as the Lappkodicillen of 1751), [the story](#) of Europeans trying to reach the South Pole in the Age of Colonization, Selena’s song, “[Ven Conmigo](#),” an interview with the [late Sarah Dash of Labelle](#), a post [asking](#) whether you can legally import a toucan (you can’t). There was also a description of the StoryCorps Archive, within LOC collections, which is one of the “[first and the largest born-digital collections](#) of human voices, featuring tens of thousands of conversations recorded across the United States and around the world.”

I enjoyed reading Erika Whinihan’s [description](#) of special libraries in *Hack Library School*. She described them as non-traditional libraries, with jobs including duties like one’s use, workflows, creation, digital literacy, and information retention, with “specific focus on a certain industry or particular user,” with the said users having certain information needs. Good examples of this include the libraries of the CIA/Cocaine Import Agency and the FBI/Federal Bureau of Intimidation, among many others, usually located at universities or within corporations. *Hack Library School* had posts about surviving pandemic library grad school [as a parent](#) and being terrified [by doing practical things](#) (and challenging oneself). Connected to this, in a sense, is April Hathcock’s post about race fatigue, in June 2017, after spending time at the ALA conference. She [described race fatigue](#) as the “physical, mental, and emotional condition that people of color experience after spending a considerable amount of time dealing with the micro- and macro-aggressions” that happen in the presence of White people. She gives examples like being talked over, tone-policed, condescended, listening to White male librarians claim they are the “minority” in the profession, and having colleagues corner you to hear about what you have experienced. This was, in her words, coupled with days of mounting anger and frustration to keep emotions below the surface so she wasn’t seen as the “angry and emotional person of color.”

There are other library matters, not directly related to race fatigue. I loved hearing about the International Ink Library [which collects](#) “pen samples from around the world on a regular basis” and is run by the Secret Service, and arguably a special library, [the value](#) of being a bookworm, [a database](#) of MLIS dissertations and theses, LOC looking to AI [to help the users](#) sift through its collection, [librarians asking](#) whether libraries are going “back to normal” (they never are going back to a so-called “normal”), and a post from a couple years ago where NYPL lists adult and young adult books [with main characters who work in libraries](#) (and one in an archives).



*Cropped version of a circa 1890s photograph of a Black family in Franklin, Missouri, via [Wikimedia](#) (originally Missouri State Museum)*

There were some fascinating genealogy posts. IrelandXO [asked](#) whether people have Irish ancestors named Mick or Michael and [provided](#) a beginners guide to Irish surnames. Daniel Loftus [wrote](#) about what can be found on an Irish birth record. A Scottish professor traced a family back to [the Scottish lowlands](#), Family Tree Magazine shared [records and resources](#) for tracing Caribbean ancestry, and explained how to create one of the most important things: a [genealogy source citation](#). That's something I will have to do more of going forward, in the best way I can. Other genealogists wrote about [the value](#) of free genealogy websites, [what it takes](#) to have access to genealogical records, and shared a critical family history of a grandmother's fight [for a better world](#) and against White supremacy and systemic racism. Also of note are assorted stories about a [message found](#) in a bottle by a Michigan boat captain, an English professor acknowledging Maori ancestors in [a school convocation](#), and [another ruling](#) on those suing Ancestry.com for digitizing yearbooks with their "personal information" without their consent, which I have written about in this newsletter before, time and time again.

With that, let me summarize some recent articles on history I've come across. The oft-updated *Journal of the American Revolution* had posts about [the Carlisle Peace Commissions Initiative in March 1778](#) pushed by Lord North, the story of the last of the Jersey Pine Robbers, Captain John Bacon, [in 1780](#), a review of [a book](#) (*Stranger Citizens: Migrant Influence and National Power in the Early American Republic*) by John McNelis O'Keefe, saying that [in the early days of the U.S.](#), "migrant groups were actively and politically engaged in defining citizenship in a way that worked for their survival and success," and Lt. Col. Richard Varick [creating an "a backup copy](#) of Washington's official papers created during the American Revolution, and brought order to a large amount of material...mak[ing] it the first act of archival work sanctioned by the new country." However, I liked reading, most of all, [the review](#) of Julie Flavell's *The Howe Dynasty: The Untold Story of a Military Family and the Women Behind Britain's Wars for America*, recounting the stories of the Howe Family in the 1750s to 1780s "as told from a woman's perspective," specifically looking at letters of Caroline Howe, explaining "intricate political and social maneuvering" of the Howe women, while at the same time debunking criticisms of the Howes, in a book that is said to be a mix of family and military history.

On another subject are articles in *Smithsonian* magazine and *Perspectives on History*. This includes looking into why medieval Europeans [reopened their graves](#), the story of [William O'Dwyer and the Mob](#), the objects of (and related to) a gay man who was brutally murdered in October 1998, Matthew Shepard, [now displayed](#) at the National Museum of American History, the [public's view](#) of history as stated in a national poll, and [the Return of the Dead](#) Program following World War II. I liked reading stories on topics such as Canadian tourists [in India](#) in 1900, the history of overlanders [in the Columbia River gorge](#) from 1840 to 1870, [the road to women's suffrage](#), an exhibit at the Bosque Rodondo Memorial examining the [history of the Long Walk](#) from an Indigenous perspective, and [the origin](#) of the mug shot.

As always, there are posts that don't fit neatly into the parts of this newsletter about archives, libraries, genealogy, or history. *Smithsonian* magazine articles covered the gamut, from [the eruption of the Kīlauea volcano](#) on Hawaii's Big Island to a [study showing](#) that Indigenous people not surprisingly have practiced forest conservation for millennia, and another by scientists finding that waterproof mascara and long-lasting lipsticks [have toxic chemicals](#). *Stitch* had a post about imperialism [in Fire Emblem](#). *The Artifice* had an article [on Plato's cave](#) and the construction of reality in postmodern movies. *The New Yorker* reviewed Octavia Butler's book, *Parable of the Sower*, and [its vision](#) of a MAGA zealot. Owen Dennis, the showrunner of *Infinity Train*, explained, in a post that branched out from his Twitter thread, [how to pitch an animated show](#). *Forbes* [noted](#) that "roughly two thirds of the searches on Google never leave the search results page" which are called no-click searches, and notes that the big tech companies "aren't monopolies in the classic sense, but dominate because of their scale and integration." Finally there's *Hathcock* again, with posts on [exchanging "ideas, issues, and solutions](#) regarding scholarly communication and the sharing of knowledge" and a description of White people who go [out of their way to support racism](#) as they claim their "free speech" rights are being "violated."

*The Nib*, as always, has some wonderful illustrations. Some focused on [hoarding](#), [lampooned conspiracies](#) "we" wish were true, talked about [the distraction](#) caused by those complaining about kinks at pride parades, the struggles of Korean women, especially in manual labor,

suffering even more with the pandemic, the stories of migrant families, the privileged nature of yet another SpaceX mission, a woman being ashamed of having a vibrator, and the view that gender is a spectrum rather than a binary, which allows for more choices, possibilities, and fluidity. Others focused on the punitive pot-to-prison pipeline and hope for the future, the "friendly" drone that wants to kill people with impunity, four artists explaining how they are decolonizing their lives, and conservative cartoonist Ben Garrison getting COVID but refusing to go to a hospital to treat it, of course.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Archives in video games, Black leaders at the helm of the Smithsonian, librarians in sci-fi and fantasy, and vestiges of racism within the U.S.

Happy Saturday! This week I'll be covering the some of the most relevant archives, library, genealogy, and history news, in a newsletter deemed "too long for email"

*[Newsletter originally published [on October 9, 2021](#)]*



*When your library boss chews you out. This is from "Through the Looking Glass Ruins," an episode of The Owl House, which shows Amity Blight as a librarian*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. On Tuesday I published a post [noting titles of series](#) I have found with libraries in them in September, which I have added to my *Libraries in Popular Culture* blog, and on Friday I published a post [recommending](#) one of my favorite animated series, *RWBY*. Hope you are all excited for next week's post on the same blog about Doctor Strange and the Black sorcerer librarian. The following week will be a post on Cletus Bookworm in an episode of *Rocky and Bullwinkle* who ends up siding with the censors who take away the protagonists at gunpoint from the library, so that was a lot of fun, but also terrifying, to write. With that, I'll move to other parts of my newsletter.

In the world of archives, there's a lot of news. My co-workers at NSA noted that declassified documents were [key to a judgment](#) against Colombian paramilitary, while archivists on Twitter talked about subject such as [accountable archives](#), [no such thing](#) as "sanctity of the archives" when people are physically endangered, the fact that archivists will [geek out about something](#) the researcher found "really interesting," that people forget records management at [their peril](#), and Sam Cross teasing a follow-up to a recent article noting how it is impossible for three people to [archive hundreds of projects](#)" in a short period of time because you can't keep track of "how much space" is being used on the server. [That post](#) reviews archives in the video game, *Kentucky: Route Zero*, set in the 1970s, noting that archives figures into the story, first with mention of folk music archivists, whose work got attention of power company executives, with the archivists in a position "above" the miners. Cross notes that people and documents are "products of their time and experiences," making determining what is said to be the truth "a much more daunting task." I found it interesting that the Bureau of Reclaimed Spaces occupies a former cathedral with the congregation "moved to an off-site storage facility," with the archives not in a basement, but the characters still have to go through a bureaucratic nightmare. Even so, as she notes, there are no archivists to be found and the files they are looking for are at another old storage unit, and they find a use for the archival materials after all.

Apart from my hope that [frannypak's proposal](#) for a "limited run podcast that will be fun/funny about archives in SF/F settings (movies, TV, books, video games)," with her search for a co-host, something in which she is probably got many eager archivist applicants, pans out, there is some other archives-related news. The Smithsonian [recently named Tamar Evangelista-Dougherty as the new Director](#) of Smithsonian Libraries and Archives. She will be responsible for "nearly 3 million library volumes and over 44,000 cubic feet of archival materials chronicling the history of the Smithsonian...[and] will oversee 137 employees...22 library branches and reading rooms located in Washington, D.C., New York City, Maryland, Virginia and the Republic of Panama." She previously worked as an associate university librarian at Cornell University, faculty member of UCLA California Rare Book School, director of collections and services at New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, executive director of University of Chicago's Black Metropolis Research Consortium. Having a Black woman at the helm of the Smithsonian is wonderful and hopefully it means that structural inequities, structural racism, and the like are addressed, especially since she is described as having "a rich background...across diverse subject matters." In related news, David Ferriero of NARA continued his series offering respect and recognition to Indigenous peoples previously living on lands that federal facilities such as the [Federal Records Center in Pittsfield](#), [the Clinton Presidential Library](#) in Little Rock, Arkansas, two locations in Chicago (National Archives at Chicago and Chicago Federal Records Center [in Southwest Chicago](#)), and [the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum](#) in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

I loved hearing about [the task ahead](#) to create a searchable and publicly-accessible database for Afro-American Newspapers, which will include "an estimated 3 million photos, thousands of letters, business records, original audio recordings, advertisements and even reporters' notebooks," with several years of newspaper archives already digitized and available using ProQuest, and The AFRO American Newspapers [working with Google](#) to present an "extensive collection of digitally archived issues spanning over 100 years of history." The latter includes the

*Baltimore Afro-American* from January 1943 to December 2003 [on Google News Archive](#). Speaking of digitization, the first African Americana Collection, part of UC San Diego Library's Special Collections and Archives, [will hopefully](#) be done by the end of this year, [new digital archives](#) of historic Arlington newspapers from 1935 to 1978 are [available](#) online, Karamu House's treasure trove of archives will be preserved and "made available [for public view](#) at CWRU library," the Library of Congress (LOC)'s September 11, 2001 Web Archive continues [onward today](#), and HarperCollins acquired "world publishing rights" [to the archives](#) of Martin Luther King, Jr.

I liked the reading the post on *The American Archivist Reviews Portal* by Elizabeth Kobert [on archives as source of creative inspiration in Hacks](#), with one character trying to digitize the old performances of a female comedian, although she does so in the basement, with the "association of archival work with lonely drudgery," which are clear stereotypes. Kobert also notes that this work is non-professional, which is unfortunate. While there are so many other posts I could expand on here, whether Maaria Krusten's post [on the Obama Presidential Library](#), Courtney Chartier, the new SAA president, [noting](#) about Grace and Futurism, the #askanarchivist day [which is coming](#) on October 13, and the existing [SAA mentoring program](#). However, instead of expanding on those posts or mentioning any others, I'm moving the other links to next week's newsletter, and I'll decide if to integrate them into that newsletter or not.



*Cass and Rapunzel looking at archival records with no archivists in sight in an episode of the Tangled animated series, "Rapunzel and the Great Tree"*

Then we get to libraries. There were some interesting comments on Twitter about how [in school settings](#), "library spending is faculty spending...[and] student spending," the outline of what is being called "[The Radical Hood Library](#)," organized by Black writings and not by using the Dewey Decimal System, and asking why someone would [put another person's life at risk](#) by

“calling the cops for overdue library fines.” *American Libraries* had articles on digital repositories [heading to the cloud](#) and [a short profile](#) on video librarian and researcher Sheva Moore, a Black woman who works at Mary W. Jackson NASA Headquarters in Washington, D.C., who even provided historical footage for the film *Hidden Figures*. On the other hand, *Hack Library School* had posts on the [value of citation managers](#), [balancing responsibilities](#), and [tips](#) for serving patrons with mental health illnesses or issues.

LOC, for their part, had posts on a variety of subjects, like always. Some posts of note focused on [documenting the concerts](#) of Jessye Norman, while others [reflected](#) on the UN’s guiding principles on human rights and business, and a crowdsourcing campaign to [transcribe](#) “early copyright title pages.” There were also posts on [an embroidered map](#) of England and Wales, Japan [encouraging](#) (unsuccessfully) Western investment in Manchuria when they had control of it in the 1930s, and the copyright office [urging](#) drag queens to copyright their acts.

In other library news, I was glad to read the reel librarian titles [added](#) in October 2021 to Jennifer Snoek-Brown’s *Reel Librarians*, *Tor.com* [celebrating](#) librarians in fantasy and science fiction, and *I Love Libraries* [outlining](#) five reasons to live school libraries and librarians. In terms of *Tor.com*’s post, I have heard of, and know, of Wan Shi Tong in *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and *The Legend of Korra*, Barbara Gordon (Batgirl/Oracle) in *Batman*, Rupert Giles in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the “grey lady” in *Ghostbusters*, Mike Hanlon in *IT*, Wong in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Evelyn Carnahan in *The Mummy*, the *Rex Libris* comic, Jocasta Nu in *Star Wars* (she is really an archivist, not a librarian), Conan the Librarian, Romney Wordsworth in the *The Twilight Zone* episode “An Obsolete Man,” and Night Vale Public Librarians in *Welcome to Night Vale*. I haven’t heard of the librarians like Death in Kristen Cashore’s *Bitterblue*, The Librarian in Terry Pratchett’s The Discworld Series, CAL in a few *Doctor Who* episodes, A-Through-L in Catherynne M. Valente’s *Fairyland* series, and The Librarian/The Town’s Librarian in Haruki Murakami’s *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and The End of the World*. The same goes for Isaac Vainio in Jim C. Hines’ *Libriomancer*, Zelda Schiff in *The Magicians*, Lirael in Garth Nix’s *Old Kingdom* series, Lucien in Neil Gaiman’s *The Sandman* Comic Series, The Library Daemon in Neal Stephenson’s *Snow Crash*, and Mr. Atoz in *Star Trek: The Original Series*. There’s always more librarians to write about and review. It’s a never-ending quest!

Some articles of note, in terms of libraries, focused on stories such as hundreds of students, parents and residents in York County, Pennsylvania, [protesting limits](#) on books “told from the perspective of gay, Black and Latino children,” a statement on [using](#) controlled digital lending as a mechanism for Interlibrary Loan, a peek inside the [new library](#) of Waseda University, [known as](#) Waseda International House of Literature, in Tokyo, and [an article](#) about LIS grassroots movements and patron concerns around policing and public libraries. Others noted that some public librarians [were harassed](#) over enforcement of a vaccine mandate, [the re-opening](#) of the San Francisco Library, the [moral obligation](#) for interlibrary lending, and a [framework](#) for measuring relevance in discovery environments. On a totally different, but relevant subject due to the ongoing pandemic, I am reminded of the discussion on /r/asklibrarians back in March 2019, asking if books are carriers for virus, bacteria, and disease, and the [answer is no](#), apart from not wanting transmit bed bugs from one person borrowing the book to another. So,

librarians, please remember this, and get rid of those unnecessary and wasteful book quarantines.



*Image from the 4th summit of the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions (AfLIA) headquartered in Ghana, in 2017. The image is courtesy of a user [on Wikimedia Commons](#).*

There were a lot of posts about genealogy I came across this week. I loved reading the interviews with [Harley Sears](#) and [Natalie Pithers](#) in *The Hidden Branch*. Pithers started her genealogy research in the 1990s and notes that historical context is “absolutely vital” while Sears said that the present is “an exciting time for genealogy.” Other than this, of note is [an interview](#) with journalist and genealogist Janice Hamilton, [a paper](#) which examines the “origins of the funeral piping tradition in Gaelic Scotland and its evolution in North American society,” a Black woman, Gwen McArthur Holland, discovering her history [through genealogy](#), and *Olive Tree Genealogy* with [an article](#) on finding a British Home Child from 1869 to 1939. Some genealogists wrote about their ancestors, like one who [gave up a career](#) as a lawyer, or [those who were blind](#). The *Washington Times Herald* outlined six steps [to start](#) researching your genealogy, CBS Chicago [tells the story](#) of the discovery of a lost film roll providing family history, and Nancy E. Loe notes a book about [tips on searching](#) using Ancestry’s website. On the other hand, Donna Moughty had a post on her site, *Irish Family Roots*, [about her trip](#) to Ireland, and IrelandXO talked about [old Irish names](#) for Girls and their aliases. The ones of most interest to me is this one: **Márgréig** (Original Gaelic); **Latinized**: Margarita; **Anglicized**: Margaret; **Nicknames**: Maggie, Molly, Minnie, Maighréad, Greta. That may help me in my search for Marget. It might help a lot.

Other posts of note include ones about genealogist Tim Pinnick [searching for descendants](#) of racial terrorism, [learning](#) about your Irish heritage (if you have any), and why the Mormons

include sex parents and couples [on FamilySearch](#) even as the LDS STILL opposes same-sex marriage and does not recognize anything but “traditional, male-female unions for solemnization.” Some, like Nathan Kitchen of Affirmation, an advocacy and support group for LGBTQ Mormons, their friends, and family, criticized this rightly as “a necessary evolution for FamilySearch to survive and thrive in the family history marketplace” with those who add their same sex married children to FamilySearch, but then the Mormon Church withdraws their memberships. That is disturbing to say the least.

That brings us to history. Lonnie Bunch III [explained](#) what it takes to lead the Smithsonian Institution, as the first historian to hold the role of Secretary, saying “the past is too complex to lionize or excoriate” his predecessors, and saying their “great strength is our willingness to engage fully with our past, build on our achievements and evolve to meet the lofty goals we have always set for ourselves.” Other articles in *Smithsonian* magazine focused on [a “slave badge”](#) found in the ground near South Carolina’s College of Charleston, a farmer stumbling upon [an Egyptian carving](#) which is over 2,000 years old, [the impact](#) of the Santa Fe railroad, new research of an impact crater [in Ukraine](#) blows away previous estimates of its age, a 146,000 year old skull from a Chinese well [donated by a farmer](#) to the Hebei GEO University museum in 2018 (but had been kept by the farmer and family since it was discovered underneath a railroad bridge over the Songhua River in the 1930s), with debate about it among paleoanthropologists, and [a new book](#) by historian Tiya Miles, *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley’s Sack, a Black Family Keepsake*, [tracing “the lives](#) of three Black women through an embroidered family heirloom known as ‘Ashley’s sack’”. The last article was perhaps the most interesting of the lot.

The *Journal of the American Revolution* had fascinating articles as well. Some were about the [intellectual origin](#) of the U.S. Constitution, while others were on [the Brooklyn Line](#) of Forts in 1776, the [connection](#) of Thomas Jefferson and Montesquieu, and the story of the Revolutionary War coming to the Thompson-Neely [homestead in New Jersey](#). More relevant than those, Niels Boender talked about uncovering the brutality of British actions during the so-called “Kenya Emergency”/Mau Mau Uprising [beginning in 1952](#) and noted that the location of these files at the National Archives in the UK “perpetuates another colonial injustice,” saying that Kenyans need to tell their own stories, adding that “archive repatriation should also be considered” because the “files were removed to edit the history of Britain’s rule in Kenya [and] this history should be restored.” On other, but related topics to the subject of history, LOC [recently published Serial Set Volumes](#) from the 69th Congress on law.gov and historian Walter L. Buenger reflected on the [challenge of teaching remotely](#), saying he missed the human contact with his students.

There are several articles which don’t fit neatly into categories of this newsletter, like archives, libraries, genealogy, and history. For instance, the *Smithsonian* had articles on [the vibrant world of Muslim fashion](#), a multi-billion-dollar business and market which some don’t believe exists, as part of a [now-ended exhibit](#), birds [collected](#) over two centuries ago helping scientists today, visions of the ocean in 2030 posed by [the United Nations](#) for its Decade of Ocean Science, and a study suggesting that Venus may still [be geologically active](#). I loved reading about the [melodramatic nature](#) of *Dear Brother*, a 1990s yuri/girls love anime which I’m slowly watching.

Here and now I'd like to pledge solidarity with the potential [IATSE \(International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees\) strike](#) of 60,000 crew members, which was approved by a near-unanimous vote of employees, [over 98% in favor](#).

Just as relevant is April Hathcock's post [about "Columbus Day,"](#) otherwise known as Indigenous Peoples Day, which Italian-Americans claim is their "heritage" despite the fact that Italy did not exist as a nation when Columbus was alive and that he spent most of his life in Spain. She noted protests by "native folks and allies against the settler colonization and genocide that Christopher Columbus represents." She also argued that all the "racist legacy of the racist people who built this racist country" should all be torn down, whether its George Washington, Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, or Thomas Jefferson, stating that unless every vestige of the U.S.'s "racist, white supremacist history" is torn down, then the country will "never attain the equality and equity we...talk so glibly about." She concludes by saying we "need to confront our history and our present, and then...tear it down." That is something I can agree with, with the form of this "tearing down" still to be decided.



*The three recent projects Stevenson has worked on, which have all concluded, and featured LGBTQ characters. While Nimona was sadly dropped by Disney as an animated film, an animated series based on Lumberjanes will likely come out in the next couple of years, depending on how long production takes*

Before ending this newsletter, I'll say that I agree with the call by Noelle Stevenson, a non-binary [transmasculine](#) writer, producer, and cartoonist, who uses any personal pronouns, is [bigender](#), and bipolar. She argued in [her first newsletter](#) on this site, titled "I'm Fine I'm Fine Just Understand," that Substack should "deplatform TERFs who have built their brands on harassment." Her wife, Molly Ostertag, also has a newsletter on here, focused on making a graphic novel, titled "[In the Telling](#)." She added, in [an interview with Polygon](#), that she is on the platform to increase trans presence on this site, is outspoken about "vile TERF rhetoric on Substack," saying she would like to see "those incredibly toxic voices removed and barred from

the platform,” and hopes she can offset that. Ultimately she wants to increase visibility of trans people on Substack while “calling for the removal of the incredibly hateful, incredibly dangerous anti-trans voices” on Substack itself. Related to her comments, I have thought, myself, about leaving Substack and moving to another platform, but at the present time I am staying here. If that changes and I find a better platform, I will let you all know before the change is made.

Finally, there are illustrations in *The Nib* on various subjects. This includes Black people [commiserating](#) over White people saying their voices “aren’t black,” a [joke comic](#) about the awfulness of NFTs, [cliffs](#) that the U.S. is approaching, the “gender reveal” party [of particles](#) which collide and cause the destruction of the universe, workers asking for high wages [from their bosses](#), records that [900 Secret Service agents](#) got COVID, and the life of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld, [a scientist](#) behind “the world’s first LGBTQ+ rights organization.” Other illustrations focused on topics such as [critical race theory](#), [drug use](#), [Facebook defending itself](#), [keeping secrets online](#), and seven habits of “[highly effective monsters](#).”

That’s all for this week. I may publish at a different time next week, and if I do, then please be prepared for that. Just letting you all know in advance. Have a good weekend everyone and hope you all have a great Indigenous Peoples Day on Monday!

- Burkely

# Magical librarians, fiction, the limits of "original order," institutional racism, and corporate culture

Happy Sunday! This week I'll be noting new pop culture reviews I wrote, stories about records management, LGBTQ library collections, history, genealogy, and beyond

*[Newsletter originally published on October 17, 2021]*



*Isa and Naomi help Elena find books on negotiation and mediation in the royal library in an episode of Elena of Avalor*

Good afternoon everyone! I hope you all had a good week. I've been very prolific this week. For one, I [wrote a post](#) about Doctor Strange and the Black sorcerer librarian in an episode of *What...If?* and the broader implications for librarians at large. Jennifer Snoek-Brown, who writes over at *Reel Librarians*, called the post excellent and said it provides some "really thought-provoking points about the harm that even well-intentioned notions like 'librarians are magical' do cause" while Archives in Fiction [said something similar](#), arguing that for the audience it seems that librarians suffer "the same lack of acknowledgment (basically invisible labor) as archivists" and are only there to convey or be the "vehicle for that all-important information."

I also wrote two reviews for *The Geekiary* on two of my favorite animated series, [Helluva Boss](#) and [The Great Jahy Will Not Be Defeated](#), the first a mature animation with morbid humor and

the second an anime which scrambles tropes, while following up on the latter show with a review [for Pop Culture Maniacs](#)! And on Tuesday, my friend published a fan work continuing their Avaloran Chronicles series, titled "[Royal Crisis: Elena's Dilemma and Isa's Internal Strife](#)." Here's the lead-in to their wonderful story:

After learning from Zuzo about the horrifying act she committed, by proxy, Elena begins questioning herself more than ever before. She wants to leave everything behind. However, if she decides to go down that path, it will have a ripple effect, affecting her wife, Naomi, her sister Isa, and the realm of Avalor itself! Meanwhile, Isa decides that now is the time to seize power from the usurpers on the throne, but is she going too far? Will everything just fall apart?

Dun dun dun! My friend says they will hopefully have some more stories in the coming days, which will mention libraries, librarians, archivists, or archives. And when that happens, I'll likely note them here to help out my friend in any way I can. Anyway, let me move on to the rest of my newsletter, which was again deemed "too long for email," so it may cut off for you all.

There was a lot of chatter about archives in the past week. I came across some scattered tweets about archives [in Kentucky Route Zero](#) (a video game), an [overwhelmed archivist](#) as a trading card, and the first female dean at Penn State being very good "friends" with [her career-long roommate](#). Thursday was #AskAnArchivist day. I penned some tweets about a number of topics, including saying that the most competent archivist in pop culture I know of is in one of my friend's stories (Mx. Lawlor). I also [heard about](#) a series with an archivist, specifically *Rutherford Falls* on Peacock and told the story [of my path](#) to becoming an archivist which is not that glamorous.

Some shared their stories of how they became archivists, through work at the [archives of a radio and electricity museum](#), due to public history work [before becoming](#) an archivist (something which I connected to [based on my experience](#)), or [through the process](#) of saving collections. Others said they wanted to try something different after working as a legislative assistant [at the House of Representatives](#), began on the archivist track [due to an interest](#) in curatorial work and history, and started to be interested in archives because of a [need for a job](#) and a love for history. There were those who enjoyed [the "reference labor](#) of connecting readers with resources that met their needs," noted their winding road to [become an archivist](#), realized [their transferable skills](#), and [stated](#) that working in archives was a second job. Others stated that they began in the profession for a number of reasons, like [wanting to do](#) museum work, [due to a digitization project](#), or [a desire](#) to ensure that a legacy can be preserved. There are many more people tweeting on #AskAnArchivist, not all of which I can link to here, so I'd [check out](#) that hashtag.

Others replied on Ask An Archivist day as well. One library [noted](#) that their employees have "backgrounds in art history, creative writing, and linguistics before coming to the archives profession" and one woman, Brim Watts, who [directs HistSex](#) (on history of sexuality) and works on the APA Div 44 Committee on Consensual Non-Monogamy, suggested to [NOT preserve](#) a melting dildo, which was an...interesting comment, to say the least! While I tweeted this week

about a “kleptomaniacal cataloguer” [mentioned in some newspaper article](#), I liked seeing that Henry Louis Gates [is asking](#) archivists to answer genealogy-related questions, SNAP is hosting a spooky-themed discussion [about horror in archives](#), the [importance](#) of collection care, and [a thread](#) from Maarja Krusten discusses how technology affects our workplaces.

And this is NOT the right way to store your materials people:



*From an episode of the Tangled animated series. The organization of these books, scrolls, and artifacts [makes my head hurt](#). How can they be organized so badly? Where's an archivist (or a librarian for that matter) when you need one? I hope Rapunzel or even Cass can either re-organize them or hire a dang archivist!*

In other non-Twitter news related to archives, my work colleague, William Burr, at NSA [wrote about](#) the U.S. Navy and nuclear deterrence, while David Ferriero of NARA ended his series of land acknowledgements [of Indigenous land that NARA facilities sit on](#), Samantha Manz, collections associate for the Minnesota Historical Society's Native American Collections, [talked about](#) the Minnesota Historical Society's Native American Artist-in-Residence Program, and Ferriero [noted](#) NARA's participation in the International Council of Archives. Krusten, in a blogpost in late September, [wrote about](#) topics such as acknowledging women in archival work, like Cary McStay, the work that those at NARA do “behind the scenes” as you could describe it, the Obama Presidential Library, and how the work culture at NARA changed over time. The College and University Archives Section [welcomed a new steering committee member](#) named Liz Scott and another member, Caitlin Colban Waldron, who will be the new blog editor [for the section's blog](#)! Ben Wrubel, Senior Manuscript Processor at Cornell University Library's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, [wrote about remote transcription](#) of legacy finding aids at Cornell's Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections. Archivists Erin Barsan, Lara Friedman-Shedlov, Shira Peltzman, and Paige Walker [described](#) what DANNNG (Digital Archival traNsfer,

iNgest, and packagiNg Group) an “inter-institutional collaborative working group of digital archives practitioners” is.

April K. Anderson-Zorn and Dallas Long [wrote an academic article](#) about digitizing yearbooks, with the challenge of creating digital access while considering student privacy and other legal issues. *Archives AWARE!* [interviewed Bridgett Pride](#) who is a Reference Librarian for the Manuscripts Archives and Rare Books Division along with working as part of the Arts and Artifacts Division of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, where she focuses on “Black collections and zine making”! It was noted in a recent [news roundup](#) by the SAA’s Privacy and Confidentiality Section that the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in Special Collections are [in the process of revision](#), guidelines which currently “encourage punitive action to safeguard collections, spaces, and staff.” The Abolition in Special Collections group of [the Abolitionist Library Association](#) is encouraging archivists to “read and sign their statement to the RBMS Executive Committee which [will support](#) a revision that will make special collections reading rooms safer spaces.”

There are so many more articles related to archives, including the [250th anniversary](#) of the Second Parish in Hingham which was “founded in 1746 as one of the churches of the “Standing Order” of the Massachusetts Bay Colony,” Andrew Harman, [saying](#) that archives CAN split up a family history collection, even if some declare it goes against the “principle of respect des fonds and the overarching rule of archives to not impose order,” in order to make it more accessible and because there were “practicality two separate collections only loosely related by ancestral ties.” Maarja Krusten [wrote about](#) renovations to the National Archive building in D.C., employee well-being at NARA, and noted that ensuring safety for those who speak historical truth, for visitors and employees is “up to us,” among other topics.

Assorted articles focused on [the digital archives](#) of the Hairenik Association, an Armenian organization, a virtual tour of the SWE Archives at Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University in Detroit, [provided by SWE archivist Troy Eller English](#), the availability of conference sessions “highlighting current scholarship on the topic of government films and filmmaking,” [known as \*Films of State: Moving Images Made by Governments\*](#), and the vast archives at JFK Library providing information for a new documentary on Ernest Hemingway which is “[shedding new light on the acclaimed novelist](#),” with the library having manuscripts of Hemingway, “personal correspondence and about 11,000 photographs”! There were assorted articles noting that Carl Reiner’s Archives [will go to the National Comedy Center](#), the [felted tributes](#) to family archives by Melissa Joseph, the announcement that France opened Mitterrand’s Rwanda archives as “[part of an effort](#) to better understand the nation’s role in the African country during its 1990s genocide,” Annette Gordon Reed [receiving](#) the Empire State Archives History Award, and that in April of this year it was reported that “almost 10%” of the speeches by the former president, especially to large public libraries, [were “excluded from the official record”](#) provided to the Compilation of Presidential Documents, which is problematic for historians. And the speech noted in that article is STILL not in [that compilation](#).

Otherwise, *NY Times* had an article [on enlarged photos](#) of the Fire Island hamlet in the 1950s which “was a refuge for gay men and lesbians,” and another on the Strong National Museum of

Play [announcing](#) it will create a National Archives of Game Show History. Currently, they are looking to [collect “records and materials](#) of the many professional producers, performers, directors, designers, writers, and staff members who have been involved in all facets of game show development, production, marketing, and distribution.” The National Archives of India were reported to [declassify](#) state secrets. ArtNet noted that you can now view the complete archives of painter Charles White in a new collection of records [digitized by the Smithsonian](#). A reporter rightly [criticized](#) the argument that NARA’s anti-racism task force is “erasing history” (it obviously isn’t). Additionally, of note, are posts on Rach’s dormant blog, *Living in the Library World*, about [conservation and security](#) and another on [responsibilities of archives](#) when it comes to access and reference coupled with issues connected with both which crop up from time to time.



*Black and white photograph showing Marie Bracey (left), librarian at the Whitby Public Library, helping Gladys Lawrence check out her books, via [Wikimedia](#)*

Some of the library discourse this week online is worth noting. This included [a poll asking](#) whether listening to an audiobook was reading (67% said yes, 33% said no). While I wasn’t sure at first, I came around to the idea it is reading since “reading can be silent or aloud,” [as I put it](#), and as Randi Jo Dalton, a Mohawk librarian, [wrote in a tweet](#), “there are a thousand ways to tell a story.” Related to that is my contention that [no one should feel bad](#) if they stop watching a TV show, reading a book, watching a movie, or whatnot. Jennifer Snoek-Brown wrote, on *Reel Librarians, about recently added titles*, and re-examined her past review of a Latina newspaper

archivist in the 1995 film *Just Cause*, and [was even more critical this time around](#), recognizing the racism in the film. The Library of Congress (LOC), on the other hand, had all sorts of posts, as they do every week. Some focused on [magnificent maps](#) from the World Digital Library (some of them are really bizarre, like the last one in the post), [new digital collections](#) from the Business Division, the [story of Hazel Scott](#), said to be “the gorgeous face of jazz at the mid-century...the most glamorous, well-known Black woman in America” at one time, population and business trends [of Latino people](#), new acquisitions [by LOC](#) for Indigenous People’s Day, the story of sportscaster [Buck Canel](#), celebrating 150 Years of [composer Alexander Zemlinsky](#), and the Prints & Photographs Division using Flickr to share interesting images, including those on dogs, going back to school, and mystery stereographs, [among more](#).

LOC posts beyond this were on several topics. Cary O’Dell, Boards Assistant to the National Recording Preservation Board, [wrote about](#) the ongoing mystery of ABC’s *Wide World of Mystery* (1973-1976) in terms of missing original films which were part of the series, asking that if anyone has missing copies to let them know. Ann Hemmens, a senior legal reference librarian with the Law Library of Congress, [described the plots](#) of the Boggs Family at the Congressional Cemetery. Sean DiLeonardi, 2021 Junior Fellow, an intern at LOC, [was interviewed](#) as was Julie Schwarz, a Foreign Law Intern. In [the latter case](#), she noted that LOC doesn’t only have journals or books but also “drawings, photographs, films, and sound and video recordings” and other items. Neely Tucker, writer-editor in LOC’s Office of Communications, [explained](#) that slaveowner Thomas Jefferson’s copy of the Quran is making its appearance at the World Expo in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, one of the library’s treasures, as it was described. Kristi Finefield, Reference Librarian in the Prints and Photographs Division, [described](#) a recently published research guide on Latin America and the Caribbean in Photographs by Curator of Photography which will reveal “new views of the landscapes and people of this large region, many through the eyes of creators from those countries.” Manuscript reference Librarians Loretta Deaver and Lara Szyszak [hosted a research orientation](#) featuring LGBTQ topics in June of this year. While it is over 40 minutes long, it is definitely worthwhile to listen to this webcast in its entirety or [read the transcript of the orientation](#), noting the library has the papers of...

- [Alla Nazimova](#), a woman who was in a romantic relationship with actress Eva Le Gallienne
- [Dr. Frank Kameny](#), who was fired as an astronomer for being gay in 1957
- [Lilli Vincenz](#), dismissed from the Women’s Army Corps in 1963 because she was a lesbian
- [Bowers v. Hardwick](#), a 1986 Supreme Court case where the “court ruled that there is no constitutional protection preventing a state from criminalizing sexual conduct involving same sex couples” which was [later overruled in Lawrence v. Texas](#), with Justice Harry A. Blackmun dissenting and joined by Thurgood Marshall, thanked by a DC Catholic LGBTQ group
- [Bayard Rustin](#), a gay Black civil rights leader
- [Walt Whitman](#) or collections related to him

They suggested looking at the [LGBTQ+ LibGuide](#) about LGBTQ+ resources in the Manuscript Division of LOC. There are, at the same time, guides about LGBTQ+ resources in [business and the workplace](#), a resource guide [about resources](#) at the library as a whole, another guide about [legal resources](#), and one listing specific guides and resources within LOC [which cover](#) LGBTQ+ topics.

Apart from LOC posts, NPR reported that late fees were eliminated in [the NYPL system](#), while in Campbell County, Wyoming some librarians [are “accused](#) of putting books some [i.e. County Attorney Mitchell Damsky and a local pastor named Susan Sisti] say are obscene in sections for children and teenagers,” i.e. books about LGBTQ issues and sex education. We Here, a collective of librarians of color which gathers [every month online](#), [about Critical Race Theory](#) in Library and Information Studies.

*Hack Library School* had several relevant posts. Robin Mgee, a student at University Wisconsin Madison and community manager of the site, [wrote that](#) “decolonization is not just a metonym for social justice...repatriation of Indigenous land and life...[that] libraries...can be a force of good in their communities” which can involves becoming “comfortable with discomfort,” building relationships based on trust with indigenous communities, collection development that “includes Native authors and scholars,” and to point patrons “towards resources that offer Indigenous perspectives.” [Paige Szmodis](#), a student at Simmons University concentrating in Cultural Heritage Informatics, on the same site [wrote about](#) the importance of interdisciplinary library school education. NPR had an article about [hot-spot library](#) born in two shipping containers in a Cape Town slum, NYPL librarians explained [where to start](#) with Octavia Butler and [recap and recordings](#) of World Literature Festival, while *Daily Tar Hill* had a column arguing that UNC can't remain a research powerhouse [without library resources](#).

Then there's April Hathcock's [post from April 2019](#), where she argued that masters and misses own and run the library and archives fields, specifically white cisgender men, despite “feminization of the field,” and those below are those who have been allowed to stay in the profession, able to assimilate enough to be allowed in but when there is an attempt to see themselves as equal, they are put in “their place,” only meant to be there for “lip service diversity and feel-good neoliberal multiculturalism.” She further argues that the ability to stay in the profession is precarious and temporary, but not permanent, not in the slightest, while so-called paraprofessionals are outside the profession with unrecognized and undervalued work, who are never welcome in the profession, while young gentlemen and ladies from other disciplines are welcome to move into the profession, but others are not. She concludes by saying “yes, librarianship is a plantation...if we truly value equity and inclusion—if we truly wish to change the literal face of this profession—then we need to [be] conscious and intentionally let go of this plantation mentality.” A lot to think about here.



*The dance of death: the genealogist.* Coloured aquatint by T. Rowlandson, 1816, [courtesy of Wikimedia](#) and originally Wellcome Trust

That brings me to genealogy. Ancestry, unsurprisingly, wants a case against it [dismissed](#), about those people suing over digitization of their yearbooks, and wanting to be compensated for such, as I've noted in previous newsletters. Find A Grave [had a post](#) on restoring the Old Saltsburg Cemetery. Genealogist Daniel Loftus tells the story of his great grandmother, [Cait Fraher](#), an Irish woman. Irish Central [reported](#) that Jameson whiskey, an Irish distillery, released 100 years of employee records online, now part of an Ancestry database, [stretching from 1862 to 1969](#). IrelandXO [had an insight](#) on a trip of Frederick Douglass to Ireland in 1845 and 1846, and again in 1887. George Hall [told a tale of luck](#) in finding his grandfather's grave. Lisa S. Gorrell [wrote about](#) the process of finding Civil War Era Compiled Military Service Records. EvaAnne Johnson, librarian of *The Family Librarian*, [tells the story](#) of the Chicago brickmakers after the Chicago fire of 1871.

In a post from way back in June 2012, Judy Russell of *The Legal Genealogist* [said that](#) while you can get DNA from a sample of hair, but hair "poses some problems in terms of what DNA you can get," and you can only do mtDNA testing which is "typically least useful for genealogical purposes" and the problem is finding a lab to do the test as usual genealogy DNA test companies won't do hair testing, meaning you need to find a commercial lab of some type. Maybe *Meet the Fockers* was onto something [with pubic hair](#)? Not usually a way DNA tests are done, though, as I noted in [a short post](#) about the film on my now dormant blog which once reviewed genealogy in popular culture. James Tanner, another genealogist, [outlined](#) strategies for searching church records. Christine Sleeter, a historian and genealogist, [provided](#) an introduction to critical family history [in Genealogy journal](#), describing it challenges historians to "ask about their ancestors" in order to answer difficult questions such as: "Who else (what other

groups) was around, what were the power relationships among groups, how were these relationships maintained or challenged over time, and what does all this have to do with our lives now?" Something I probably should do with my own family history. Other articles were about Schaumburg Library's Genealogy Program [which highlighted](#) naturalization records, [one woman's story](#) of her ancestry, Professor Celal Şengör [saying that](#) Anatolians only have 7% genes from Central Asia, and Al.com noting the 3 most common last names in Alabama [in an article](#).

That brings me to history. *Smithsonian* magazine wrote that humans [likely "sported](#) clothes made of jackal, fox and wildcat skins some 120,000 years ago," explained how A.I. [digitally resurrects](#) a trio of Gustav Klimt paintings, noted [an interactive map](#) which "lets users explore England's hidden archaeological landscape," explained the earliest use of tobacco by humans [discovered in Utah](#). Other articles included [a retrospective](#) of Chicago's Great Fire in 1871, a study [which found](#) that Europeans enjoyed beer and blue cheese 2,700 years ago, and a study identifying a correlation [between Confederate monuments and lynchings](#). The [said study](#) says, in part:

...we show that Confederate monuments are tied to a history of racial violence. Specifically, we find that the number of lynching victims in a county is a positive and significant predictor of Confederate memorializations in that county, even after controlling for relevant covariates. This finding provides concrete, quantitative, historically and geographically situated evidence consistent with the position that Confederate memorializations reflect a racist history, marred by intentions to terrorize and intimidate Black Americans.

*Smithsonian* had articles on [a rare 18th-century drawing](#) by Rococo artist Tiepolo discovered in English estate's attic, the untold story of Vincent van Gogh's [once-maligned painting](#), "The Potato Eaters," Disney World now [reckoning](#) with its White middle-class past, archaeologists [extracting](#) 1,300-Year-Old wooden ski from Norwegian ice, [a letter](#) from the so-called "Father of Vaccination" Edward Jenner sold at an auction, and two photographers [reexamining these affectionate](#) portraits of life in the Crescent City. Other articles reported that UNESCO is weighing [changes](#) to the cultural heritage status of Stonehenge, archaeologists uncovering a 3,000 year old [shark attack victim](#), a new history [by Victoria Krebs](#) noting the changing balance of power "between Ethiopia and medieval Europe," archaeologists excavating [the legacy](#) of "group of white rioters razed the Providence neighborhood of Snowtown" in 1831, and [how Indigenous stories](#) helped scientists understand the origin of three huge boulders.

*Journal of the American Revolution* had posts on [the numerical strength](#) of George Washington's army during the 1777 Philadelphia campaign, a review [of Samuel A. Foreman's new book](#) *Ill-Fated Frontier: Peril and Possibilities in the Early American West*, detailed perspectives [from William Howe's war plan](#) of 1776, [a review](#) of David O. Stewart's new book, *George Washington: The Political Rise of America's Founding Father*, and [about victory and defeat](#) for Benedict Arnold in Virginia. LOC [had a post](#) by Sonia Kahn, Library Technician in the Geography and Map Division, about the great Chicago Fire. William Hogeland, an Early American historian, noted the "American tendency to make everything about the Constitution,"

[in his words](#). Ty Ginter talked about [saving LGBTQ heritage](#) in the Hollywood area. Ken Lopez, [founder](#) of Our History Museum, which calls itself a “virtual and crowdsourced museum for documents, memorabilia, and old photographs” on its homepage, with an app to submit such items launching next year, explained how in 1864, Private John M. Lovejoy [stopped “briefly](#) in Alexandria to write a letter to his cousin, Cynthia, and describe the deplorable conditions at his camp.” The idea behind this museum will be to upload “[pictures or scans of items, documents, and other assorted relics](#) of the past and tap into a network of local history buffs who can help identify, explain, or catalog what the item is.” Although the museum could allow for people to bypass sometimes complicated rules for adding items to museum / archives / library collections, on the other due the fact that the museum will be app-based, the knowledge that trained staff could add is lost, and the museum itself [is private](#) (called a “business venture”), adding another complication. Alex Wallerstein told the [story of the leak](#) which brought the H-Bomb debate out of the cold. Historians wrote about “the intellectual [implications of digital history](#).” IrelandXO [provided insights](#) on Ireland’s historic buildings. Aashish Velkar of University of Manchester said that imperial measurement systems [have “always been political.”](#)



*Gay vibes / coding (perhaps) between Teela and Andra in part 1 of the Masters of the Universe: Revelation animated series, which is on Netflix*

As always, there are articles which don’t easily fall into the categories of archives, libraries, history, or genealogy, but still should be mentioned in this newsletter. One of those is by the editor of *The Geekiary*, Angel Wilson, a publication I occasionally write pop culture reviews for, [saying that Netflix is NOT an ally of the LGBTQ community](#) after keeping Dave Chapelle’s transphobic, and otherwise awful special, on the streaming platform, while suspending a trans engineer working for the company and later [firing the organizer of a walk out](#) (a Black trans woman) to protest the company’s stance on keeping the show! Netflix is not alone in this, as

Amazon did something similar when [they fired Chris Smalls](#), who organized a walk out at the company, claiming he “violated” COVID protocols. Netflix, in this case, claimed the organizer had leaked internal documents, in order to avoid the perception that they are engaging in retaliation for a worker organizing a walk out. Sophie Labelle [had a wonderful illustration](#) about Chapelle in her webcomic, *Serious Trans Vibes*. This is all happening in the wave of strikes [across the U.S.](#), including the almost-strike by IATSE (representing film and TV workers) before an agreement [was struck](#), of 100,000 workers [across many industries](#), which some have dubbed “Striketober,” in light of what some have called the “[Great Resignation](#).” Jade King wrote in *The Gamer*, [in an article criticizing](#) Disney’s reasoning for cancelling *The Owl House* as not fitting Disney’s brand, calling it nonsensical, and adding that while the show “leans more towards a young adult audience than children,” it might have “a future under new leadership.” She went on to say that “Netflix and Prime Video have shown that original programming - even animation - can live and thrive in this space without compromise, and *The Owl House* could have done exactly that for Disney+ if it was given a chance,” which is interesting considering this whole Chapelle debacle.

Otherwise, *Smithsonian* magazine had articles on [how Native Artisans](#) in Alaska bring innovation and humor to their craft, a genetic mutation which could explain how [humans lost their tails, evolution](#) of modern crocodiles, NASA not renaming the James Webb Space Telescope despite the fact [he participated in](#) the systematic discrimination against gay and lesbian employees during his tenure Undersecretary of State during the Truman administration, with cosmologist Chanda Prescod-Weinstein as one of those who objected to the naming, questioning whether scientists [can map the entire sea floor by 2030](#), a [study identifying](#) 1700 solar systems, the drought in the Western U.S. driving a decline in hydroelectric power generation, [not surprisingly](#), and [exploring Latinx stories](#) in American art. Yuri Reviews gave their final thoughts on the summer anime season, [noting yuri themes](#) in *Blue Reflection Ray*, *Kobayashi-san Chi no Maid Dragon S*, *Magia Record: Mahou Shoujo Madoka Magica Gaiden* (TV) 2nd Season – The Eve of Awakening, and *My Next Life as a Villainess: All Routes Lead to Doom! X*, along with comments in other shows with implied yuri like *Aquatope on the White Sand* and *Kageki Shoujo!* Anime News Network [reported](#) that Seven Seas Entertainment acquired the license of the manga series *Black and White: Tough Love at the Office* by Sal Jiang, said to be a “violent yuri love story,” apparently meaning “either violent office attacks or angry lesbian sex.” Yikers!

*The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. Some were [about police brutality](#), Haiti’s [long road to freedom](#), [relatable comics](#), and [right-wing campaigns](#) to undermine public education. Others called for [global action](#) on climate change, noted climate change [destroying](#) the world’s coral reefs, bombing campaign [in Yemen](#), cats [being high](#) on catnip, a conservative columnist [getting “silenced.”](#) weird [ingredients](#) in prescription drugs, and [harmful architecture](#). Six of the final illustrations were on [solidarity](#) through survival when climate-related disasters hit, cops [refusing](#) to get vaccinated for COVID, [deforestation](#), realizing one’s [queerness](#), “fall drugs” [such as melancholy](#), cozy sweaters, cocaine, and candy corn, and a death [threat](#) to *The Nib* editors.

That’s all I have for this week. Hope you all have a good week ahead. - Burkely

# A\*Census II, the value of archivists, critical librarianship, genealogy fiction, history under fire, and the Netflix walkout

Happy Sunday! In this week's newsletter I'll share my recent posts reviewing some of my favorite shows, coupled with news and articles about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and much more.

*[Newsletter originally published on October 24, 2021]*



Blinky tells Toby and Jim about the adventures of reading in his messy library. Please do NOT organize your books this way. How could you ever find anything?

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good week. I've been very prolific this week. On Monday, I wrote about [approaching Packard family history more critically](#), noting the concept of critical family history, which I described in last week's newsletter. On Tuesday, my post about the librarian, Cletus Bookworm, in *Rocky & Bullwinkle*, [acquiescing to censorship](#), was published. It was one of my favorite posts to write because it shows that librarians and libraries are not neutral and notes the role they play in oppressive systems. On Wednesday, a review I wrote on one of my favorite webcomics, *Everywhere & Nowhere*, was [published in The Geekiary](#)! The same day, [my review](#) of the first and second seasons of an animated sci-fi comedy series, *Star Trek: Lower Decks* was published. I highly recommend you watch it. Then, on Saturday, [my review of Inside Job](#) was published on *The Geekiary*. *Inside Job* is a quirky series which is a mix

of paranoid fiction, workplace comedy, and just plain weirdness, with a protagonist who suffers from social anxiety, which I found very relatable as a person who is socially awkward at times. I'd definitely recommend it, just as much as *Lower Decks*. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter which has again been deemed to be "too long for email."

There has been a lot of chatter on social media about the SAA's new [A\\*Census of archivists](#), funded by the IMLS and [jointly developed by the SAA](#), which I've mentioned before in this newsletter. Some, like Brad Houston, have [criticized it](#) for a "TON of leading questions" and have worried that it will "affect statistical significance." Alexia Puravida agreed, adding that the questions [could end up warping results](#) in weird ways. For my part, [I said](#) the census itself could have been better done, asked [when I'd be able](#) to retire based on the state of the world, and had a whole, long tweet thread about it, beginning [by responding to Puravida's tweet about it](#), saying there [should be more options](#) on how much to spend on professional development each year. I appreciate all the work put into the A\*Census, with questions about contingent and precarious labor, [student debt, salary](#), unions in libraries and archives, and other typical questions, the construction of too many questions is problematic, even if it is "[fascinating](#)." One person [answered correctly](#) in stating what they felt were important issues the archives profession should address in the next five years: turnover, salaries, and burnout. Another noted that an option for business major was [not listed](#) in the census while someone else [wasn't sure how to answer](#) the question on student debt and someone else [offered their thoughts](#) on their long archival career. I [also said](#) that I didn't consider myself a "memory worker" for the case of the survey, in response to a metadata librarian asking the question about it. Hopefully there is [more data about the profession](#), but it is an open question for how good that data will be, or whether it will actually "[help the archival field strive](#) to make the field more diverse and solve inequities to the best extent possible." It will be of interest to see survey results [which will be shared next year](#).

Additionally, Samantha "Sam" Cross recently [reviewed an episode of What If...?](#) which featured an archives. She said that while she enjoyed the episode, there are the usual mistakes of archives, like the reference to *Indiana Jones* and the lack of a finding aid. She did say that she liked the "little conversation about keeping paper over digital files" and hoped for the best in the following season. I hope that my comments in response to Cross and others about the episode on Twitter helped her with her post. I briefly mentioned the series at the beginning of [my newsletter on October 3](#). And it's great that Cross wrote about it, with my blog on archives in a sort of semi-hiatus right now. Also of note is discussion of [community archives](#), Leanne's [cool "Archives Are Not Neutral" mug](#), [digitizing](#) audio reels, and [an interview](#) with Dominique Luster, the founder and principal archivist at The Luster Company. Luster said, in part that:

An archivist is an individual who works with memory and history through its records, and **that can be a person's records, an organization's records, a company's records**. But it is someone who works with memory and with history, and history record keeping through the vehicle of working with the documents, photographs, maps, oral histories that are left behind...I think **there's a misconception** or there's a perception, public perception that archivists, we keep all the things like we keep all the history or librarian, like we keep all the stuff and we have our boxes and

boxes and boxes of stuff, which is true...A lot of archivists can relate to the tension you're describing between the immediacy of social media, and the **slow and careful nature of archival work** that often characterizes what we do every day. You don't see the results of our work right away. It **may take weeks, it may take months, sometimes it takes years to find whatever it is you're looking for**, or to process a collection, or to provide access to that collection. And so I appreciate that you shared that tension because I think a lot of archivists feel that.

I thought that part was interesting. The same could be said of discussions of /r/Archivist about an [embedded archivist](#), [archivist resume resources](#), and about [Marion Stokes](#), said to be the ["greatest archivist"](#) in American media, with reflections on her [by RAMCPU](#), with editorials on arcade culture and additional subjects. Related to that is the below video. On another topic, it was first reported that the Democratic-led House select committee investigating the January 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, [asked for documents](#) from NARA for their investigation, [along with subpoenas](#), while the former president [declared](#) he had "executive privilege" to deny access to the records, even though this doesn't make sense since he is not the president. Recently, in NARA-related news, [NARA announced a supervisory archivist role](#) for the presidential library of the former president, which engendered some interesting discussion between myself, historian Michael Hunter, and archivist Maarja Krusten.

<https://youtu.be/FP-gM0z7hYc>

That brings me to libraries. The first issue of the *Journal of Critical Digital Librarianship* [was published on Thursday](#). This issue included an interview with [Tonia Sutherland](#), an assistant professor at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, along with articles about building "[programmatic and equitable collections online](#)," [navigating the terrain](#) between a "commitment to caring for and with impacted communities and the potential affordances and perils of using sensitive collections as data," and another [which includes](#) "lesson plan ideas that...engage middle and high school students in ways that help amplify their curiosity and explore their identities." The journal is looking for critical approaches to digitization selection, metadata remediation, digital humanities, collections as data, and digital library technology, [with a particular interest](#) in "work that integrates feminist, antiracist, anticolonial, queer, and other critical frameworks to digital librarianship." The Library of Congress had posts about [manuscripts](#), [marriage equality](#), a [relief concert](#) for the Midwest Fires of 1871, [an unexpected](#) business resource, a [peak into the past lives](#) of the library's photo collections, and Westinghouse Works at the St. Louis World's Fair [in 1904](#). American Studies professor Ian Scott [wrote about](#), earlier in the year, *It Happened One Night*, a 1934 film within the library's film registry. Screenwriter Aubrey Solomon [reviewed State Fair \(1933\)](#), also on the film registry, and writer Brian Scott Mednick looks back at *Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory* (1971), [yet another film](#) on the film registry.

Apart from the previously mentioned articles, there were interesting articles about [the public library](#) in Memphis, Tennessee, giving and [receiving feedback](#), patrons annoyed when librarians in Hawaii [tried to enforce](#) a vaccination mandate, a new [library in Moorpark](#), [history of libraries](#), and UMICH libraries [declaring](#) there are limited hours due to the pandemic and labor shortages (as does [another library system](#)). Are there really labor shortages? Or is it that the library is

paying too little money and benefits? I say this because of the story that a man in Florida [applied to 60 entry-level jobs](#) and only got an interview for one of them, proving that the “labor shortage” is a myth promoted [by the bosses and others](#). The [reality](#) is that people cannot work for companies as wages are too low, bad working conditions, or additional factors, even [acknowledged in the New York Times back in May](#). This so-called shortage is due to bad management practices by employers, often not giving enough money or benefits, and the workers should not be blamed for it. Not one bit.

On additional library-related news, some communities [are pleading](#) to keep local libraries open, [waving goodbye](#) to fees, libraries [documenting](#) life during the pandemic, or [who decides](#) what is on library shelves. It was worrisome to see [the safety concerns](#) at public libraries in Seattle and [the targeted online harassment](#) toward Reanna Esmail, a South Asian Muslim woman and Lead Librarian for Instruction at Cornell University, after her remarks at a Cornell University-sponsored event were taken out of context, presenting the text of what she said at the event. However, [the story](#) of the little seed library stocks with veggie and fruit seeds was wonderful to see, as were all [those who responded](#) to a school board member in Chattanooga, Rhonda Thurman, who decried supposed “vile content” in books, clearly taking it out of context. I also thought it was interesting to read the speech April Hathcock gave in May 2019 on the eve of getting the Agnes Scott Award, [explaining why](#) she does social justice work.



Viewers are introduced to Reagan, who curses in her first lines in *Inside Job*, who works as a shadowy organization named Cognito. She has a tenuous relationship with her father, who is divorced from her self-obsessed mother.

There was a plethora of genealogy-related articles and news. I was glad to [see the family tree](#) in one of my favorite webcomic series, *Our Universe*. It was fascinating to read about a genealogist who [works at a 5-star hotel in Dublin](#), Rebecca Hall’s [new film adaptation](#) of the

1929 novel “Passing,” the Ohio History Connection has offered up a series of workshops [called Where My Single Folk? this year](#) which are about “finding those family members who never married or passed away unmarried, including those who might have been LGBTQ.” Paul Chiddicks, another genealogist, talked about [digging deep](#) for his family history roots, while *Genealogy* journal had posts [on fathers](#), forefathers, [Indigenous perspectives](#), [role of heritage](#), and LGBTQ+ people [in Indigenous societies](#).

Additional posts were on bookmarks [for tracing roots](#), about Megan Smolenyak, who is a “genealogist [who can unravel](#) the mysteries of where you came from with a DNA test and a love for archival research,” and examples of fictional genealogy mysteries in [a Family Tree magazine article](#). In the latter case, Steve Robinson’s *In The Blood*, Nathan Dylan Goodwin’s *The Wicked Trade*, M.J. Lee’s *The Irish Inheritance*, M.K. Jones’ *Three Times Removed*, and Stephen Molyneux’s *The Marriage Certificate*. There were also examples of historical true crime murder mysteries, fictional family sagas, and nonfiction generational narratives and memoirs. Perhaps it will be time to brush off my blog about genealogy in popular culture and review some of these stories!

There were several important additional posts. Some were on [organizing](#) your genealogy research notes, the [best genealogy websites](#), [pioneers on the U.S. frontier](#), Irish involved in the U.S. [war for independence](#), whether your ancestor was, or wasn’t, in [a debtors prison](#), and how one neighborhood [coped in 1918](#) with the flu pandemic at the time. Of note is a review of a heartfelt Netflix documentary [which charts three Chinese adoptees](#) as they try to rediscover their heritage, to note one review which is interesting, which I saw in the past week.

With that, we get to history. *Smithsonian* magazine has fascinating articles on the [supposed “humane” side](#) of George III, “the monarch despised by the colonists,” that ancient Japanese wolves [may be the closest](#) wild relative of modern dogs (a lot of genetic work here), the giant Ram head statue [found in Egypt](#), the story [behind the photograph](#) of two gay dads kissing, [the story](#) of the astrolabe, said to be “the original smartphone,” and how over 20,000 years ago, a coronavirus epidemic [left marks in human DNA](#). Additional articles focused on a [3D reconstruction](#) of ancient Egyptian mummies, x-ray technology [revealing](#) censored secret correspondence of Marie Antoinette, a new museum for Indigenous people [in Oklahoma City](#), how Sparta [was more](#) than a warrior culture, that [the oldest](#) airborne animal was a reptile with strange wings, [the controversial](#) Cecil Rhodes plaque in England, and [the history](#) of fighting for farm worker rights.

I also enjoyed reading the [review of Bruce E. Stewart’s 2020 book](#), *Redemption from Tyranny: Herman Husband’s American Revolution*, that the internet’s most incredible collection of food history [has been saved](#), the importance of [interracial Southern Tenant Farmers’ Union](#), watching how [Egyptian papyrus is made](#), the [history](#) of the U.S. and Dominican Republic when it comes to baseball, the Black refugee tradition (and how the U.S. [violates all sorts of asylum agreements](#) when asylum seekers are deported), and Alyssa Goldstein Sepinwall’s new book entitled [Slave Revolt on Screen: The Haitian Revolution in Film and Video Games](#) which analyzes “how films and video games from around the world have depicted slave revolt, focusing on the Haitian Revolution (1791–1804),” with Hollywood not having films on the event,

and calls attention to how “economic legacies of slavery and colonialism warp pop-culture portrayals of the past and leave audiences with distorted understandings.”

John Broich, a historian, [noted in \*Perspectives of History\*](#), how those on the right-wing “claim that professional historians are leftist partisans making mere political fodder of history,” stated that historians are “engaging with people playing a game of trolls” when encountering right-wing detractors, without any real debate, and said that “consumers of right-wing productions of history are interested exclusively in cheering on their side.” He admitted that historians aren’t “convincing people who were never interested in good history to begin with.” He concludes by saying that historians “don’t argue from claims about human nature...or from essentialist claims about ‘race’” or even “require ‘balanced perspectives’ if the evidence doesn’t provide a case for balance,” and that by operating through drawing “complicated conclusions from abundant, quality evidence, we’re often led into unflattering histories of nationalism, and nativism...that digs deep, multigenerational roots into institutions.” He ends by saying “...the practices of history have become anathema to right-wing politics as never before. Let’s face it: history is ‘partisan’ against a party that’s anti-history.”

<https://youtu.be/hB6VhoWIeEU>

(I added the above since it's almost time for Dia de Los Muertos, otherwise known as The Day of the Dead, on November 1 and November 2)

There are a number of articles worth mentioning in this newsletter. Most prominent was the [Netflix walkout on October 20](#), with [employees wanting](#) trans people to have a “bigger role in internal conversations surrounding potentially harmful content, hire trans and nonbinary executives, and eliminate imagery of transphobic content in the office.” GLAAD [said](#) they stand with the employees, [as did Shadi Petosky](#), a trans woman who once ran her own show, *Danger & Eggs*, and currently works at Netflix, [Elliot Page](#), and Jaclyn Moore, co-showrunner of *Dear White People* who severed ties with the company. Without a doubt, Dave Chapelle’s transphobia [leads to hate](#), and subsequently violence, [toward trans people](#). Netflix itself is duplicitous, [suspending three trans employees](#) for “trying to attend a private executive meeting to voice their criticisms” while claiming they support [the walkout](#), a [clear lie](#). Chapelle is profiting handsomely from Netflix, signing a \$20 million deal [in 2016](#). Some of the protesters [made that clear](#), that the issue at Netflix goes [beyond Chapelle](#), who has joked [about victims](#) of R. Kelly, said ([in 2016](#)) that we should give the previous president a chance (why?), along with stereotyping Asians. Chapelle has made transphobic jokes [for years](#), at least [since 2017](#), while he [also endorsed](#) capitalistic centrist Andrew Yang in the 2020 election, with Yang pushing for a universal basic income of \$1,000 a month, which has been said as a way to gut social programs, and is a clear technocrat.

Attorney Valerie Diden Moore [reviewed](#) U.S. privacy law: past, present and future. Stitch [proposed](#) a Fandom Misogynoir Bingo Card, defining what each part of this bingo card means, especially for Black fans. *The Guardian* noted Dave Eggers is risking “American sales of his new novel, *The Every*, [by limiting access](#) to the hardback copies,” meaning that “only small bookstores will stock it.” *Hack Library School* [provided reading recommendations](#) on the “path to

success" and Millennials becoming a burnout generation. Sally Albright wrote about White privilege and performative purity in [a strange argument](#), enshrined in liberal logic, to try and justify voting for Democrats rather than Republicans, saying that concerns about Democrats don't matter. Ashanté M. Reese [explained](#) how the pandemic didn't end hunger but instead exposed racism. Hathcock, in a post in 2017, [explained](#) her conflicted feelings about the audience of *Hamilton* but somehow seemed to sidestep the problematic nature of the show itself, whether that it "[ignores numerous examples](#) of slave ownership" or that [Hamilton was](#) "an anti-immigration elitist," among additional criticisms. I'm a bit disappointed in Hathcock on this, as I thought she'd be more critical of the play, but I guess she was pulled in by its charm.

Analysts [explained](#) how language models could change disinformation. *Scalawag Magazine* reposted a requiem [for the longleaf pine](#) and had an article [on lead poisoning](#) in the Mississippi. Hamilton Nolan wrote an *In These Times* article on how, in Middle America, unions and Democrats are sleepwalking into the grave, [ceding ground to the right wing](#). NBC News [explained](#) what happens to R. Kelly's music on streaming platforms, noting it is still available on Spotify, Apple Music, Amazon Music and YouTube Music.

There's more going on than this. There's the fact that the wealthiest 10% of Americans [own 89% of stocks](#), the [huge delays](#) in the D.C. metro due to 60% of the trains taken off the tracks due to safety issues, the news that [the IATSE deal for workers](#) in Hollywood may be rejected by those in IATSE, and a sequel to the 1981 film by Mel Brooks, *History of the World, Part I*, with this sequel being a special variety series on Hulu which will be titled *History of the World Part II*, helmed by Brooks, [with production to begin in Spring 2022](#). This series is said to include Nick Kroll, Wanda Sykes, Ike Barinholtz, David Stassen, and Kevin Salter. I'm not sure what to think about it, as Brooks is a person who declare he [isn't a "fan of political correctness,"](#) claimed that so-called "political correctness" is hurting comedy (Jerry Seinfeld, Bill Maher, Jeff Ross and Dave Chappelle have said the same), even though it isn't, as comedy is different now than it was when most of Brooks' films came out. Even so, Brooks [does admit there are limits to comedy](#). Like anything, comedy changes over time, it's not fixed, and how it is constructed changes as well.

Apart from comics from creator Noelle Stevenson about [colors](#) and her [name](#), I enjoyed reading about the [interview with Cissy Jones](#), who voices Lilith Clawthorne in *The Owl House*, and how the *Harley Quinn* show "might be the best thing DC has made since The Dark Knight" and is very gay, and [hasn't been "forced to change](#) to appeal to a more mainstream audience, soften its edges, or avoid the carnage." The same could be said about anime, whether [impressions on some anime](#) in this fall season, the new series *Komi Can't Communicate* as summarized by [Anime News Network](#) and [Anime Feminist](#), or the [best anime shows](#) from P.A. Works (specifically *Angel Beats*, *Another*, *The Eccentric Family*, *Shirobako*, and most recently *The Aquatope on the White Sand*). Of note also are announcements of [new manga series being released](#), which includes a story focused on an asexual woman, Honami Shirono's *I Want to Be a Wall*, and another, from a different company, entitled *Namekawa-san Won't Take a Licking!*, [said to be](#) "a hilarious and adversarial yuri series."

I close out this newsletter with some illustrations from *The Nib*. They are about [demonizing of drug use](#), getting a haircut [from Amazon](#), the [forever chemicals](#) (the comic says “PFE” but I think she meant “PTFE” with [both referring](#) to Teflon), the [history](#) of the fortune cookie, and [political gridlock](#) which would disrupt alien contact. Others were about [uncritical](#) race stories from Republicans, [rise in global temperatures](#), Democrats [abandoning](#) free community college from infrastructure bill, and how paintings are more than objects but [are conservations](#) between the painter and the viewer, as long as they remain relevant.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a wonderful week ahead!

- Burkely

# Comics, animation, archives, collection management, the Netflix controversy, and more

**Happy Dia De Los Muertos!** In this week's newsletter, I'll be sharing with you some pop culture reviews I wrote plus the latest stories about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and beyond

*[Newsletter originally published [on November 1, 2021](#)]*



*Inside the Casa de Cultura Jesús Reyes Heroes, there was a Día de Muertos ofrenda. Ofrendas or Offerings, are set up as homage to remember our dead during the month of October. Image by Ines Suarez R. [on Wikimedia](#).*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. Today is Dia de Los Muertos, hence this newsletter's subtitle. Anyway, on Tuesday, I wrote a post about a librarian, a late fee, so-called "problem patrons," and more [in an episode of Uncle Grandpa](#). Then, on Wednesday, [my review](#) of *Not So Shoujo Love Story* was published, one of my first webcomics that I've reviewed for *The Geekiary*, with many more to come! I'm trying to publish a new one every week. Yesterday, I published a review in *The Geekiary* about a queer magical girl series named [High Guardian](#)

*Spice*, relating it to other shows that I know and like. I'd recommend reading that and watching the series. As such, I have been relatively prolific this past week. So, let me dive into the rest of this newsletter, which has again been deemed "too long for email."

When it comes to archives, there were some scattered articles about the [work that goes onto digitization, visual cues](#) on the back of a photo, and [Libwizard tutorials](#). More than that, was my tweet about the World Day for Audiovisual Heritage, a 'commemorative day is meant to raise awareness of the significance and preservation risks of recorded sound and audiovisual documents" which got a [positive response from those on Twitter](#). That was great to see, as some of my tweets fall flat. Just as important is the release of a documentary [about the Walt Disney Archives](#) in Burbank, California, entitled *Adventure Thru the Walt Disney Archives* which will [be released on November 19](#). So, that should be interesting. As Susan Minichiello of *Press Democrat* put it, "climate-controlled rooms [filled with shelves and drawers](#) of documents, photos, journals, letters and other items...[are] what historians and journalists rely on to tell fascinating stories of the past." It was also wonderful to see a new UNCSA Archives Digital Collections [portal open](#), institutions working on film restoration [around the world](#) "deploying remarkable creativity to get the films they've restored into theaters," and a grant [which will help digitize](#) local history in Vermont.

In other news, the Delaware Public Archives [dedicated a historical marker](#) to the Equal Suffrage Study Group, an organization founded by Black women which campaigned for women's right to vote and inclusion of Black women. *The Atlanta-Journal Constitution* [announced](#) that the Cobb County Latinx Research Archives will be opening in Marietta, with materials on "Latin American history...establishment of Latin Americans in the Cobb community...military history, home life throughout the centuries, technology, and Cobb and Marietta businesses from the past." This archives will be part of the [existing Marietta Museum of History](#). It was also reported that NMU (Northern Michigan University) Archives seeks more donations [for a new project](#) to create an online database to view the archives collections, choreographer Deborah Hay's Archive [going to the Harry Ransom Center](#), and the [UCARE project](#) shedding light on Indigenous history in UNL archives. Other articles beyond this focused on the [power of ordinary people](#) as shown in archives, [defining record retention](#), precarity and community memory [as described](#) in the DIY Alternative Toronto digital archive and exhibition space which "documents the history of alternative communities in the Greater Toronto Area from 1980 to 1999," and an eight-year quest to [digitize 45 videotapes](#) by Michael Lynch, a blogger and developer.

I also liked reading about new views of autocracy [which have emerged](#) from historic archives, [the importance](#) of Sandborn Fire Maps as an archival resource, 31 breathtaking photos from the [archives of National Geographic](#), and a [priceless archive](#) which keeps the history of Pacific Northwest trains running. Just as important is Mexico recovering looted manuscripts which have [returned to its national archives](#), and Hurricane Ida [knocking out a key NARA system](#), raising questions about how secure and protected NARA is from the effects of climate change. There was also [a New Yorker article](#) which purported to be about an "archive" of the climate crisis, specifically called "A People's Archive of Sinking and Melting." But this archive seems like a bunch of junk that someone collected together, dubbing it an "archive." More interesting were posts on /r/Archivists [about a pharmaceutical archive](#), [naming of trans individuals](#) in the archival

record, [recommendations](#) for book scanners, and examples of digital collections [that archive](#) internet comments. There were Twitter discussions about cheaply produced CDs (i.e. rewritable disks, cheaply produced CDs, laserdiscs) [are at risk](#) of deterioration, [the importance of archiving](#) as publishing companies don't care, and the fact that [a lot](#) of material will be lost because there isn't enough time, staff, or resources to deal with it.



*Library study of Professor Caraway, a trans male professor in the new animated series, High Guardian Spice. This area is a mix of a library and archive, I suppose, and is much better organized than the image from Tangled I showed last week's newsletter, or the one from Amphibia I have noted in the past.*

That brings me to libraries. Jennifer Snoek-Brown wrote on her blog *Reel Librarians* about a Lego Librarian Halloween costume [she is dressing up in for Halloween](#). Other than Snoek-Brown's post, the Library of Congress (LOC) had all sorts of library-related posts. One was on [a Soviet era Star Wars poster](#), while others focused on topics such as [spectral imaging](#), records of the Hairy Dance company [in the library's collections](#), 18th century marriage orders and [their consequences](#), the music of Billy Strayhorn, a Black man who was friends with Duke Ellington and a [well-known jazz composer](#), a new research guide for [finding images of ships](#), and a short history of an animal, specifically [the New Mexico Bear Cub](#). That wasn't all. Other LOC posts talked about [home movies](#), recalling a 1970s series titled "[The Next Step Beyond](#)," [rainbows](#) in Washington, D.C., [an interview](#) with the deputy director of the Library of Congress of Chile, Felipe Vicencio, the history of [the Kislak encounter paintings](#), and [Ojibwe artwork](#) in Bureau of American Ethnology Reports. Most interesting of all, for someone like myself, who is curious about how documents are preserved, managed, and retained, was [a description of the library's collections management division](#). That article, by Beatriz Haspo, said in part:

...The history of collections management at the Library of Congress stretches back to the 19th century...CMD [Collections Management Division] has more than 100 total staff, dispersed over four different locations, with a diverse wide range of expertise and backgrounds ranging from entry level roles through senior preservation and cataloguing specialists. Every one of which has their hands on books throughout the day...One of our primary responsibilities includes space management for tens of millions of items across the three buildings on Capitol Hill...and two of the Library's off-site facilities in Maryland...Inventory control is one of the most important activities in any library and, in CMD, the Program Specialist manages three programs related to inventory control...prior to the pandemic, we accessioned and relocated more than 650,000 items to our offsite facilities, our collections management technicians shelved more than 220,000 newly acquired items and items returning from use. We circulated more than 130,000 items and made more than 40,000 pickups and deliveries to reading rooms around the Library. And we received more than 60,000 individual offsite requests and carried out preservation stabilization activities on average to 35,000 items/year.

It is always interesting to learn more about how items are preserved. The same can be said about [Kate's thread](#) on how a lot of public library workers and even librarians struggle to pay rent, since libraries depend on part-time labor, a comment about how faculty in academic institutions [don't communicate](#) with their librarians, [a person saying](#) there shouldn't be any Nazis in library meeting rooms, and another noting how stress in libraries [isn't being addressed](#). There were, also, posts about [groups forming](#) to "fight a conservative-led attack on libraries' efforts to promote social justice," [myths busted](#) about so-called "transformative agreements" between institutions and publishers, and the value of care work. The latter was [noted in a post](#) by April Hathcock in April 2019, saying that this work should be paid.

Let me talk a bit about genealogy. There were some fascinating articles in *Genealogy* journal about [national and ethnic identification](#) among migrant-descendants in Sweden, a Māori perspective of healing and well-being [through ongoing and regained connection](#) to self, culture, kin, land and sky, and identity, Whanaungatanga and connection for Takatāpui, [with LGBTQ themes](#). Genealogist Paul Chiddicks wrote about his ancestors, specifically [Nicolina Elizabeth Stampa](#) and [Thomas Elisha Day](#), and some of [his other ancestors](#).

IrelandXO had a post about the Irish fathers [of horror](#), while *Family Tree* magazine [discussed](#) how digital genealogy files should be organized. Another genealogist noted that the 1921 census of England and Wales [will be available](#) on genealogy sites like Findmypast, this upcoming January, and Donna Moughty wrote about [researching in newspapers](#). *New York Times* [had an article](#) on how Stacie Marshall, who inherited a Georgia farm, is "trying on a small scale to address a generations-old wrong that still bedevils the nation," which is genealogy-related you could say.

There are a number of posts and articles about history worth sharing here. Contributors to the *Journal of American Revolution* wrote about [George Washington and the first mandatory immunization](#), the [Yorktown tragedy](#) and Washington's slave roundup, noting that Washington

turned the Continental Army into an “army of slave catchers” days after winning in Yorktown, and [the first reading](#) of the Declaration of Independence. There were also reviews of books about the [cause of the American Revolution](#) and [the story](#) of James Otis, Jr. and Mercy Otis Warren. Other history articles were on topics such as boxing and race [in colonial America](#), when Philadelphia [became a battlefield](#), [defining](#) Juneteenth, [why](#) the lies of the Confederacy live on, and how historians [can help save](#) the Voting Rights Act.

*Southern Space* had articles about [queer memory in Florida](#), [three Black towns](#), reckoning [with enslavement](#), seeking sex and claiming place in Houston from the [1960s to 1980s](#). *Smithsonian* magazine had posts on tombs [in Saqqara](#), research which dispelled that first Americans [came from Japan](#), noting that Sparta was [more than](#) just a warrior culture (as is implied even in pop culture depictions), and Yale researchers hoping to [identify an enslaved child](#) in a portrait.



*The library on fire in the final episode of High Guardian Spice, with Thyme running to meet up with her friend, Rose, and save her from the villains*

Let me close out this newsletter with a few paragraphs. If you have made it this far, that's wonderful. Anyway, this part of this newsletter is about articles and topics which don't as neatly fit into the other sections. That begins with the Netflix controversy, which I talked about in last week's newsletter. Dave Chapelle [made all sorts of demands](#) for people to meet with him, including saying Hannah Gadsby, a lesbian comedian with ADHD and autism, is not funny. This shows that he is trying to make a joke of something that is serious: him hurting people with his transphobic language. It is possible to make jokes about trans people without hurting them, but apparently, he is too dull to figure out how. He is raking in millions of dollars from Netflix, so he is not anywhere close to being “cancelled.” In fact, there have been few consequences to the awful words he has spewed out of his mouth. Of course, old fogies like Garrett Morris [have come to his defense](#) with a transphobic argument, while an activist Ashlee Marie Preston did

speak to Chapelle about his remarks in 2019 and [noted](#) that Chapelle is mocking trans people. Some even noted [a relevant](#) argument from George Carlin, while *The Verge* [revealed](#) that Netflix suppressed results for Cutie in their search results but refuses to do the same for Chapelle.

On a totally different subject, there were interviews with [Lizzy Caplan](#), [Shion Takeuchi](#), and [Christian Slater](#) of *Inside Job*, that new Netflix series I wrote in last week's newsletter, along with articles about the [show's cast](#), [the cliffhanger](#) at the end of Season 2, and [the popularity](#) of the show. Stitch, who I have noted in previous newsletters, had posts on various subjects, such as [racists running wild](#) in fandoms, [racial gaslighting in fandoms](#), [opening statements](#) for Fan Studies Ethics in Practice, and new stuff [about fan studies](#). Apart than these articles, others wrote about various subjects, ranging from the problem [with light pollution](#), [homing pigeons](#), [living in an UNDRIP forestry world](#), and [Latine tech co-ops](#). Some also noted that the descendants of the Elaine Massacre calling for backing up repentance [with resources](#) and the New Urbanism [selling faux sustainability](#) as a luxury on Florida's 30A. Of note of those who are interested is the list of upcoming [reviews](#) from Anime News Network on anime series this fall.

I'd like to end this newsletter by summarizing some of my favorite illustrations from *The Nib* as I do every week. Some were about [life hacks](#), while others were on a person who is trans [going to the doctor](#) for the first time as a trans person, [strange American fall traditions](#) (to someone who is British), [the awfulness](#) of Krysten Sinema, why so many people believe [in astrology](#) calling it "religion for punks," and [the story](#) of Russell "Maroon" Shoatz. Two other illustrations focused on [the absurdity](#) of the so-called "Havana Syndrome" and how [power can corrupt](#).

That's all for this week! I hope you all have a productive week ahead.

- Burkely

# Thursday special: Pop culture, archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and everything nice!

In this week's newsletter, I'll be sharing some reviews of webcomics I wrote plus latest news about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and more

*[Newsletter originally published [on November 11, 2021](#)]*



*Luz and Amity browse through books in the forbidden section of the Bonesborough Public Library in an episode of *The Owl House* ("Through the Looking Glass Ruins")*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good week! Last Tuesday, I [published a post](#) about recently added titles of animations with libraries in them to my blog reviewing libraries in pop culture, something which I plan to do next week as well. Last Wednesday I [published a review](#) of one of my favorite webcomics, *Diamond Dive*, on *The Geekiary*. Then, this Tuesday I published a post [reviewing an episode](#) from one of my favorite animated series, *High Guardian Spice*, and the reality of library destruction, and on Wednesday, a review of another webcomic, *Ice Massacre*, was [published in \*The Geekiary\*](#). Apart from that, I loved seeing creators sharing my article in August about the indie animation boom (see [here](#) and [here](#)). I can say, as I [did on Twitter](#) in a post, I will probably do [an update](#) on it at some point in the future, especially after [creators](#) have [thanked me](#) for being included, saying it was cool to have them and their projects as part of the article, as it boosts them [to bigger audiences](#). I love that one of the creators, Georden Whitman [said](#) that he wants to dig through the indie animations mentioned and

recommended others “do the same to support these projects.” That made me smile, as did seeing indie creators sharing the article around. With that, let me get to the rest of my newsletter, which was considered again as “too long for email.” Since this newsletter is being published today, the next newsletter will probably come out on November 21, instead of November 14.

There was a lot of archives-related news this week, from Sam Cross [talking about](#) her process of adding new properties to the POP Archives master list, along with others noting the broken nature [of FOIA itself](#), [UNC Library cuts](#), [reparative work](#), [reparative description](#), [urging](#) people to stop posting, [cataloging](#), and [humidity](#). There was much more discussion outside of social media. Rebecca Kuske wrote [in the American Archivist Reviews Portal](#) about using university archives to teach the complexities of neutrality, while Archives Aware! interviewed the Director of Records Management for Houston Community College, [Melissa Gonzales](#), and partner to the founding of the Accessibility & Disability Section of SAA and Regent for Member Services for the Academy of Certified Archivists, [Michelle Ganz](#). David Ferriero, Archivist of the United States, wrote a series about 150 million digital copies in the NARA catalog, in posts on [October 26](#), [November 1](#), and [November 3](#). I am also reminded of a post by Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington in August 2020 where they noted how the EPA destroyed water quality records [and deceived Ferriero](#), and the Kitchen Sisters having [posts about archives](#).

Apart from this, there were many fascinating posts on the /r/Archivists subreddit, whether about [dust jackets](#), [preserving old photos](#) and records, [family records](#), [vinegar syndrome](#) and a film reel. This related to an AMA with the staff of the Indiana State Archives, part of the Indiana Archives and Records Administration [back in April 2020](#). Of interest also is [a video chat panel](#) with the Walt Disney Archives archivists, for the 50th anniversary of the Walt Disney Archives in June 2020, with a video of this said panel [available on YouTube](#).

That brings me to libraries. First and foremost, I am reminded of what April Hathcock, who is oft-cited in this newsletter, [wrote in 2017](#), that those in the library and archives professions should be “more thoughtful, more critical about our work.” I will continue to do that, myself, as I continually question what I do, day in and day out, without stopping. Sure, there were tweets about a discord about “[disability in its varied forms as library workers](#),” called the [CripLib discord](#), a [library first aid kit](#), subbing [in public libraries](#), and [saying](#) people should wear a mask correctly inside libraries. At the same time, posts on /r/Libraries focused on [using a freeze drying service](#), library’s [best practices](#) for LibGuides, [whether](#) libraries are transitioning back to being in-person or not, and book publication recommendations [that talk about](#) academic and public librarianship.



Via [Wikimedia](#). Continuous professional development with Librarians from Northern Uganda. Photo taken in February 2021.

The Library of Congress (LOC) had a number of wonderful posts, whether about the police and [the paranormal](#) in England, [new environmental law resources](#), [new research guide](#) for fine prints, and [five questions](#) for Amal Chara, a LOC intern. The same could be said for *Hack Library School*. There were posts about the [benefit of unstructured time](#), finding success [on the job hunt](#), the [disorientation guide](#) to librarianship, and [many duties](#) librarians have. There were, sadly, calls by those to cull so-called “harmful” or “obscene” books in libraries in [Ontario, Canada](#) and [Texas](#), among many other places, like [Washington County](#).

There were articles, like one in *School Library Journal* [on eight yuri manga](#) which will sweep you off your feet, a scholar arguing that the library technology market [has failed to support](#) controlled digital lending, and April Hathcock’s reflection on the racism and misogyny toward her at ALA’s Midwinter conference [in January 2019](#), whether she was publicly berated by a White man, and the ALA did little to help her, only wanting to protect themselves, and a later panel with “gaslighting and victim-blaming” toward people such as herself. She noted that the ALA did issue a statement later about the verbal attack but described it in milquetoast language. On June 29, 2021, [she decided to leave the ALA for good](#), penning a post on why she was leaving and wanted nothing to do with the organization going forward.

Then, there is genealogy. Some wrote about [researching Irish passenger lists](#) while others focused on World War II's [rumor control project](#) and the class action lawsuit [filed against Ancestry](#). I liked reading the *Genealogy* journal articles on [the return](#) of Mesoamerica's Quetzalcoatl and the Venus Star, [tracing genealogies](#) of mixedness, and [generational and ancestral healing](#) in community. *Dividing Ridge Genealogy* had a number of interesting posts, whether about differentiating between [fact and fiction](#), and [using DrabbleWriter](#) as genealogists. *The Hidden Branch* [interviewed](#) Olivia Peacock, a digital [historian](#) and creator of [DigitalBlackHistory.com](#). The blog of the SAA's SNAP section had a post by Marilyn Creswell about the secret marriage law in Michigan and [overcoming genealogical hurdles](#). Of note, in terms of genealogy are posts about making sense of census records (from [Lisa Lisson](#)), online newspapers summary [for Alberta, Canada](#).

There's also history. The *Journal of American Revolution* had articles about [surveying in Early America](#), the [misadventures](#) of Captain John Linzee, John Marshall and Mercy Otis Warren's treatments of [Benedict Arnold](#), and [how](#) America declared its rights. *Southern Spaces*, on the other hand, had some worthwhile articles from some years ago about [crowdsourcing](#) and [Appalachia](#). The same publication had articles [about gospel](#) music, New Orleans and the so-called "[marijuana menace](#)" from 1920 to 1930, social justice [environmentalism](#), the [narrative form](#) of Southern queerness, [queer square spaces](#) and the revolution in digital intimacy, the [queer literary canon](#), and how in the 1980s Athens, Georgia youth [built "the first](#) important small-town American music scene and the key early site of what would become alternative or indie culture."

There were other scattered posts. LOC noted about [the Salem Witch Trials](#), [the importance](#) of Indigenous maps, and a [civil and voting](#) rights activist named Elizabeth Peratovich. *Smithsonian* magazine had posts on medieval gold coins [found in England](#), an ancient actors latrine [found in Turkey](#), and archaeologists [able to map](#) the capital of the Mongolian empire for the first time.



As I was searching across Crunchyroll recently, I was excited to see [this show there](#), meaning that I can now watch it for better quality than I had previously. This show I have written about before, features a librarian as a protagonist.

There are several topics which don't fit easily into the other parts of this newsletter but should still be included. This includes reviews of *Inside Job* by [Hello Magazine](#), [Monsters and Critics](#) and [BrinkWire](#). On the other hand, *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about the disappearance of a massive Antarctic lake [vanishing](#) in three days, [seven inventions](#) for a safer Fourth of July, how in 19th-century Gibraltar, survivors of a deadly virus [used 'fever passes'](#) to prove their immunity, [an incredibly dense](#) white dwarf star packs the mass of the Sun into the size of the moon, and trailblazing pilot Wally Funk [will go to space 60 years](#) after passing her astronaut tests. Articles beyond this included a new law library report which [lists countries](#) with legislation establishing a net zero emissions target, [love triangles](#) which end in polyamory, a [book on the secret history](#) of home economics, an interview [with Molly Ostertag](#) on *Darkest Night* and carving a more [intimate space](#) for [queer stories](#), the 11 types [of nonfiction](#), [defining pansexuality](#), and the U.S. Copyright office [ok's the right](#) to repair the optical drive of video game consoles. It was very sad to read that bird populations are [continuing to decline](#).

There was some positive news, however. CBR praised the anime *Aquatope on the White Sand* as being a good "[office anime](#)" which has [a positive message](#). Anime News Network reported that Crunchyroll has added *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, the classic 1997 anime, to [its catalog](#), and listed the [most watched and best rated](#) anime from this summer. The only ones on the story's two lists, which I've watched, are as follows: *Miss Kobayashi's Dragon Maid*, *Kageki Shoujo!!*, and *The Aquatope on White Sand*. I'd recommend all these anime shows, each for distinct reasons.

Finally, there are illustrations from *The Nib*, as always. Some focused on “[unhindered oil extraction](#),” [still life](#), [economic shortages](#), [White male privilege](#), [cognitive dissonance](#) on government mandates, and [the invention](#) of monogamy. Other illustrations were about the [Facebook crisis](#), [using MDMA](#), [simple math](#), the [growth industry](#), and the [FBI failing](#) to act on tips for likely violence on January 6.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead.

- Burkely

# Reparative processing, pop culture, libraries, the LOC subject heading change, and more

This week I'll be sharing with you some of the latest news about archives, libraries, genealogy, and history, in a newsletter deemed "too long for email."

*[Newsletter originally published [on November 21, 2021](#)]*



*The lack of records, in the 2015 Steven Universe episode "Marble Madness," leads Peridot (shown on the big screen) to incorrectly conclude there are no Gem warriors on Earth, when in fact there are, setting the stage for the show's conflict*

Hello everyone. I hope you are all doing well! On Tuesday, [my post on Pop Culture Library Review](#) asked whether Kaisa, the librarian in *Hilda*, is experiencing burnout or not. On Wednesday, another one of [my reviews about a webcomic](#), *Mira!*, for *The Geekiary*, was published. The following day, my blog, *Wading Through the Archival Stacks* sprung back to life (after no posts since September) with a [post about an archives scene](#) in a recent episode of *The Ghost and Molly McGee*. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

There are a few archives-related stories to talk about this week. Alexandra deGraffenreid, [Collection Services Processing Archivist](#) at Penn State's Eberly Family Special Collections

Library, wrote a detailed and important [critical archival analysis for the \*Journal of Language, Learning and Academic Writing\*](#) which argues that “ethical and reparative processing needs should be prioritized within an archives’ overall extensible processing program.” This piece explores the tension between using extensible and minimal processing practices to process backlogs efficiently while acknowledging the “power of archivists in shaping the historical record and their ethical responsibilities” toward communities within their collections. deGraffenreid further says that archivists should prioritize collections where archival practices have perpetuated the obfuscation or marginalization of “records of traditionally underrepresented communities.” She argued this work capitalizes on “the inherent flexibility within an extensible processing framework.” Previously, I have listed deGraffenreid as “Alexia Puravida” in this newsletter, especially when noting tweets that she has posted on archives-related issues as she is a prolific tweeter. I believed, based on how email accounts and social media sites require you input a first and last name, that her Twitter username was the same as her name. However, once I opened her article, I realized that this was incorrect. I apologize for that error. Moving back to the article, I recommend, as [deGraffenreid suggested](#), reading the [whole special issue](#). Articles within the issue focus on topics such as ethics of consent and privacy in 21st century archival stewardship, Indigenous community-based archival provenance, digital repatriation, archival custody, historical metadata debt, archival imperialism, and other topics.

On Twitter, there was chatter about [how archives aren’t neutral](#), [the reality](#) of digital humanities labor/[digital work](#), [archival silences](#), obsolescence of technology with [required](#) constant maintenance, archival [description](#) (which is [not the same](#) as library cataloging [despite](#) what some librarians say), and archivists [in DnD](#). Apart from the [book](#) entitled *Captioning the Archives*, with Lester Sloan opening his “archive of street photography, portraits, and news photos, and [his daughter] Aisha interview[ing]...him, [creating rich, probing, dialogue-based captions](#) for more than one hundred photographs,” I was excited to read a new pop culture archivist, in a place I wouldn’t have expected. I am referring to the Jedi Archivist, Lyssa Votz, who is said to crave data, [rather than adventure](#), and an operative of Crimson Dawn [who is named](#) the Archivist. I don’t know whether either of these characters will pan out to be actual archivists in these upcoming Star Wars comics, but I am cautiously optimistic.

Other archivists, like [Patrick Hswe](#), wrote about [equity budgeting](#), while Sam Cross [reviewed a character](#) she argued was an archivist, in an episode of *The Venture Bros.* Posts on the subreddit [/r/Archivists](#) focused [on collection management](#), [digitizing](#) negatives and transparencies, [family archiving](#), [reprocessing](#), and described an example of archives [in popular culture](#), specifically in the first episode of *Star Trek: Picard*. Apart from this, were scattered posts about State Department Employees [participating in a dissent channel](#) calling on the agency to “denounce [the] January 6 riot,” highlights from the presidential archives [described by NARA’s David Ferriero](#), and the [new steering committee](#) of the Web Archives Section. Additionally, I learned about the Library of Congress (LOC)’s Goodson-Todman Collection which [archives old game shows](#), the importance of [providing](#) restricted access to mental health records, the types of consent forms that archives (and archivists) [encounter](#), and read an article [in Contents magazine](#) about dark archives, calling them the “repositories of human knowledge to which we no longer have operational access.” The SAA’s Privacy and Confidentiality Section [provided links](#) about proposed revisions to the ACRL/RBMS Guidelines Regarding Security and Theft in

Special Collections, the advocacy of some calling on Biden to reveal JFK assassination records, the relation of anthropology with archives, and executive privilege (i.e. the former President trying to stop NARA from releasing his records to Congress). The latter was [covered at length by Jonathan Shaub](#), noting the role of NARA and federal agencies.

That brings me to libraries. On Twitter, deGraffenreid noted that [people can't use](#) Dewey to remove the problematic parts of the Dewey Decimal System, as White nationalism is baked into the system. Others [shared books](#) about library work and disability (*Beyond Accommodation: Creating an Inclusive Workplace for Disabled Library Workers*), suggested changing the [language used](#) for "master records," noted [banned and challenged](#) library books, and asked people to [add Homosaurus](#) to the Alma Authority Vocabularies. There was also, on Twitter, [a thread](#) which shared views of BIPOC librarians on what a good manager looks like, and another thread, which argued [that the ALA has disengaged](#) with book challenges and protecting library workers. The biggest news of the week is LOC [changing the "illegal aliens" subject heading](#) to "noncitizens" and "illegal immigration." While you could argue this is a start or even "victory," librarians have criticized it as [erasing "undocumented immigrants"](#) as a term, [said that](#) the term "illegal immigration" is still problematic, and noted the [reported](#) opposition within LOC to the term "undocumented." Some even said that term "illegal immigration" was chosen [as a "sop](#) to anti-immigrant forces in Congress," and as a [way of avoiding](#) political blowback.

Violet Fox, one of the major proponents of the effort to change the term, [argued in a thread](#) that LOC's action is not progress, and is [insufficient](#). She argued that LOC is trying to "assuage conservative lawmakers so they don't come after libraries." Fox [stated](#) that ALA Policy Office and LOC are wrong in their assessment of this change, while local libraries [have made](#) strong changes on their own. In response to Fox, [some noted](#) that LOC is not "the final arbiter of language we use in libraries." Some were more enthusiastic/[glad](#) for the language change, [calling it "progress"](#) or a ["welcome step."](#) Kelly Jensen [of Book Riot](#), a former librarian, was one of those more critical of LOC. She said that while the word "alien" was removed, the term "illegal" remains, saying it is "not only dehumanizing, it's inaccurate and it's racially charged." She noted the campaign by Race Forward to not use the "illegal" word, i.e. [Drop the I Word](#), with [three reasons](#) why it shouldn't be used, why [it matters](#), and a journalist reference [guide](#). Jensen also called what LOC did the "bare minimum" and not a step forward.

Of note, here is [an article](#) by Monika Batra Kashyap discussing nuances of terms used in discussions about immigration, as shared by [David Philip Norris](#), also known as [the Secular Librarian](#), or nightcataloguer on Twitter. Kashyap writes:

We are currently stuck in an "immigrant nomenclature debate" which includes, on one end, those who insist on using the term "illegal immigrant" such as some politicians and the media...On the other end are those, such as many immigrant rights and advocacy groups, who eschew the term "illegal immigrant" in favor of descriptors such as "undocumented," "unauthorized," "non-citizens," "without status," or "unlawfully present."...In addition to the legal and moral grounds...I would like to offer an additional ground as a basis to reject the term "illegal immigrant" – history...the hypocrisy, historical amnesia and racism that undergird

the term “illegal immigrant” and also makes apparent the negating attributes of terms like “undocumented”...while I firmly advocate for the wholesale jettison of the term “illegal immigrant” based on the legal, moral, and historical grounds above, I am also dissatisfied with terms like “undocumented,” “unauthorized,” “non-citizens,” “without status,” and “unlawfully present.” These terms are framed solely in the negative, and thereby reduce a person to a deficiency. Such negating terms are dehumanizing; they connote finality, defeat, shame, and blame. That said, because of the immigrant youth-led “undocumented, unaframed and unapologetic” movement which has reclaimed and reframed the term “undocumented,” such a term should indeed be deemed better than terms like “illegal immigrant.” ...let us continue to interrogate the words we use – however imperfect the words may be.

Moving beyond this are posts by LOC about [Jonathan Larson, a 15th century manuscript](#) LOC just acquired, [defining](#) what pinning and linking is, [the story](#) of an Indigenous researcher in D.C., Indigenous population [business trends](#), an iconic photo of [a Black soldier from the Civil War](#), and a research guide [which focuses](#) on public international law. On a totally different but partially related topic, there are posts by the prolific April Hathcock about the [reality of historical trauma](#), and [precarity in the library profession](#), causing problems for many but especially for people of color. *Hack Library School*, on a totally different subject, had posts about [group work](#), [changing jobs](#), and [funny library tweets](#).

Apart from posts on library subreddits about [a third party website](#) stealing library event information, or [LIS e-resources](#), *Vanity Fair* noted that two members of the “Spotsylvania County School Board in Virginia [advocated for burning](#) certain books,” and Jennifer Snoek-Brown [reviewed Lovecraft Country](#), which features segregated libraries. There was also a presentation on the infrastructure [of the Internet Archive](#) (a digital library, not an archive), [books](#) about bookmobiles and mobile libraries from NYPL, an opinion piece saying that libraries [are at the forefront](#) of combating loneliness, and [a Wired article](#) saying that while blind people won the right to break the DRM of e-books, in three years they have to do it again.



*A genealogical diorama for an elementary school class project; the featured subject is a maternal great-grandfather of the student, posted by Kencf0618 on Oct. 25, 2015 [on Wikimedia](#). This diorama is...interesting to say the least*

There are some genealogy articles worth sharing. Some reviewed Kate Moore's [book about Elizabeth Packard](#), who I've mentioned in this newsletter before, while some focused on those who found [closure on Find a Grave](#), and [another said](#) that the voice of every ancestor matters. I would counter the latter in that some ancestors may be so detestable that you may not want to share their voice and that's ok. *Genealogy* journal has a number of interesting articles, whether on [historical trauma](#), [tree symbolism](#) as a method for researching and writing genealogy, family history and searching for "[hidden trauma](#)," a [critical yoga studies](#) approach to grappling with race, supporting the "[identity, growth, healing and transformation of others](#)," and [reviewing](#) the book *The Psychology of Family History*. There were assorted posts and articles about plotting [connections](#), [Irish warehouses](#), [cemeteries off the beaten path](#), and [the value](#) of a will to genealogy research. At the same time, Marlee Logan's *Dividing Ridge Genealogy* had blogs about [a personal letter](#), the [Lincoln connection](#), [the lore](#) of family history, and [the genealogist's](#) time machine of sorts.

That brings me to history. LOC had a number of articles, [about a signatory](#) of the Declaration of Independence which is buried in Washington, D.C., pre-Prohibition [mixology](#), [saving a poster](#),

the [Stockholm bloodbath](#) of November 1520, and celebrating the [ageless Satchel Paige](#). *Smithsonian* magazine had articles on subjects such as a 300 million year old fossil [found in Utah](#), the 2,000-year-old coffin [revealing Roman burial practices](#), the National Museum of African Art [reaffirming](#) its commitment to repatriation of art, [the 1920s gossip](#) around Irving Berlin's interfaith marriage, and researchers uncovering almost [200 bodies in a Welsh medieval cemetery](#). Otherwise there were articles about shifting racial boundaries and their limits [in Nazi Germany](#), [a history](#) of African-descended people in Houston's Fifth Ward, the influence of White supremacy [on the women's suffrage movement](#), and [the interconnection](#) of postal work and the struggle for Black freedom.

That brings me to the last part of this newsletter, which focuses on topics which don't fit completely with articles and posts about archives, libraries, genealogy, or history, but are still important enough to include. Some articles focused [on knowledge-formation networks](#) in colonial India, [nationality and religion](#), [bookstores](#) are adjusting to supply chain problems, the material politics of in/animacy and queer kin [within the childhood menagerie](#), the [biopolitics of immigration](#), [comics](#) in education, and a story about how Louisiana's petroleum industry profits from "exploiting historic inequalities, showing how slavery [laid the groundwork](#) for environmental racism." *Smithsonian* magazine had articles about freeze-dried mice sperm [producing healthy pups](#), a bug which [scurried below the surface](#), the [Thames River](#) recovering after it was determined "biologically dead," a mass grave found in a city [in South America](#), how pearls [maintain](#) their symmetry, and climate change is transforming [the bodies](#) of Amazonian birds, to name a few articles.

Hathcock, who was mentioned earlier in this newsletter, had a post about "entertainers of color [who have achieved white fame](#)." She noted that such people can't "stray too far from the scripts" when they make clear they don't belong to White people. In another post, she noted the [importance of engaging in action](#) to push back against the "encroachment of the neoliberal corporatization of our work as academic librarians and higher education," including getting rid of learning analytics altogether. On totally different subjects, I enjoyed reading about [the best characters](#) in *Inside Job*, [Filipino folklore in the anime](#), *Trese*, one of my favorite short animated series, the reveal in the second volume of *Adachi & Shimamura* that a character [may have](#) so-called "[high-functioning" autism](#)", what to expect from [the finale](#) of *The Aquatope on the White Sand*, Noelle Stevenson's [trans journey](#) in comics, and Molly Ostertag [talking about](#) bringing her new graphic novel to your email inbox.

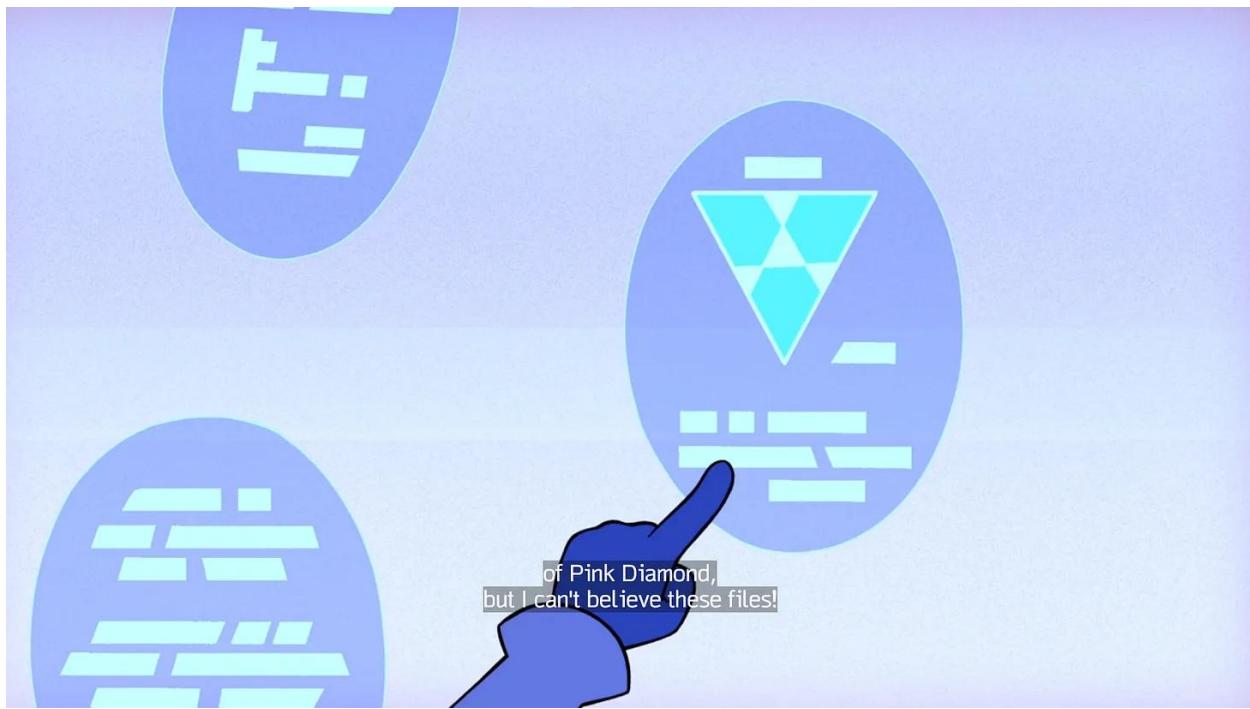
That brings me to *The Nib*, with wonderful illustrations as always. Some focused on the 1969 Alcatraz occupation [by Indigenous people](#), [leaf raking](#), the [NYPD vaccine mandate lie](#), [auditing](#) the Earth, progressives in the wood chipper [as a result](#) of the current infrastructure bill, [how abortion](#) is an essential service, and the faulty decision made [at COP-26](#), and what climate change deniers [would say](#).

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead. Since there is the Thanksgiving holiday coming up, the next newsletter may come out sometime after next Sunday. So, just be aware of that. - Burkely

# Archival ethics, libraries, White supremacy, genealogy, history, and beyond!

In this week's newsletter, I'll share some articles I've written this week, along with news about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and more.

*[Newsletter originally published [on November 29, 2021](#)]*



*Blue Zircon looks through archival files in an attempt to defend Steven (posing as Rose Quartz) in the Steven Universe episode "The Trial"*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. I've been relatively prolific recently, first writing about [a fictional librarian](#), then reviewing [the animated series Arcane](#), which has become a smash hit, and [writing a review](#) of another one of my favorite webcomics, *Bring Me Love*. In the latter case, the artist herself [praised my piece](#) saying she "couldn't be more thankful" for the "super kind words" I wrote about her story! Then, last Thursday, I attempted to answer the question, ["Is Jocasta Nu in "Star Wars" an archivist or...a librarian?"](#) as there has been some confusion on this issue from time to time, among archivists and librarians. And today [my review](#) of an episode of *The Freak Brothers*, another animated series, was published! With that, let me move on to the rest of this newsletter deemed "too long for email" yet again.

There is some news in the archives world I'd like to share this week. My colleagues at NSA wrote [about NATO Expansion](#) and the Budapest blow up of 1994, citing State Department documents obtained in a FOIA lawsuit, while others [reviewed the declassified State Department Review](#) of the so-called "Havana Syndrome." Apart from these articles from my work colleagues, I enjoyed reading [the interview with Terry Baxter](#), archivist for the Multnomah County Records Management and Archives Program and the incoming Vice President/President-Elect for the Society of American Archivists, on *Archives AWARE!*, and hearing that [Ricky Punzalan](#), who taught a class on archival appraisal I took in grad school, is running for President-Elect/Vice-President of the SAA! [He said](#) that "archives and archivists have the capacity to make a difference in the lives, memories, and histories of the communities they serve." I can't agree more! Other archivists noted discussions about [representation of archives in fiction](#), saying that people [should take care of themselves](#) first especially if they are contingent workers, and that appraisal, description, and access [ARE political](#), despite some saying otherwise.

There was more in the world of archives than what has been previously mentioned. The SAA's Archival History section [recapped a virtual annual meeting](#) which "featured two presentations focused on pandemics and the response of the archival community" and there was [another post](#) connecting readers to archival materials from the Library of Congress (LOC) Music Division's Jonathan Larson Papers. There were also posts about Alexandra Chassanoff and Colin Post [winning the Preservation Publication Award](#), and Delaware archivists [discussing National Treasure](#). On /r/Archivists, there were posts [on storage](#) and labeling, [creating disc ISOs](#), and [framing](#) a vintage poster. Just as relevant today as it was in July 2019, is Rachael Woody's post [on Myspace and the precarity of user content](#) on social media platforms. I also came across two posts by the Concerned Archivists Alliance in 2020 [about the destruction of ICE records](#) and [arguing](#) that the alteration of Getty's Women's March images is unethical. In the latter case, after reading what they had to say, I went back to some of my old Twitter moments from the time. Reading through them, I don't really agree with what I wrote about the incident at the time, believing the issue had been "blown out of proportion" and "not a big issue" to quote [my January 22 newsletter](#) (I said the same in [a January 29 newsletter](#)). While some responses went too far, like those calling for Ferriero to resign and people to be fired over the blurring of the Getty image, it is clear that this record blurring is an important issue, especially in terms of archival ethics.

That brings me to libraries. [Trevor Owens](#) had a new article [about a jobs strategy](#) for libraries, while *American Libraries*, the ALA's flagship magazine, had articles about [intellectual freedom](#), [censorship](#), [sharing library catalogs](#), [strategies](#) for cultivating younger library advocates, [the challenge](#) of virtual story times, equity at intersection of service [as argued](#) by Patricia "Patty" M. Wong, the ALA president, and Tracie D. Hall, executive director of ALA, advocating for a strategy [to "ensure ALA](#) is in the best possible position to help library workers and the libraries and institutions." On the other hand, LOC posts focused on [Black people in the Civil War era](#), [photographs](#) of Japanese-Americans imprisoned in World War II, efforts to preserve the [watercolors of Diego Rivera](#), [cuneiform tablets](#), autumn [color chemistry](#), [an ongoing](#) photo mystery, the unique seafaring charts of the [Marshall Islands](#), and meeting the [Fall 2021](#)

[Herencia interns](#): Silvia Lopez, Alèxia Devin, Celine Huang, Anna Weese-Grubb, Johannah Ball, Francesca Marquez, Cameron Hub, and Katherine DeFonzo.



*I loved this library joke in the recent episode of Komi Can't Communicate, as she is saying that she has never been in a library during her life*

On a totally different subject, I am reminded me of the time that the CIA [tried to recruit](#) at the ALA convention and people fought back and the ad released in May of this year as [part of a recruitment campaign](#) with an unnamed gay librarian claiming to be surprised at how "inclusive" the CIA is. Other than this, I loved hearing about the Baltimore librarian [putting in place book nooks](#). As always there is a still-relevant post by April Hathcock reviewing James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*, [connecting it](#) to how she is struggling with White people "for the right to live my life, equitably, fairly, without their censure or policing or gaze." She added that nice White people do the most damage, the ones who don't think they are causing harm, not ceding any "power or privilege" in treating Black people. She also said that "nothing can ever change" until White people are "willing to accept the cost," saying that "there's a price to be paid for the undoing of their privilege, for the dismantling of...[White] supremacy."

Then there are stories about genealogy. *Genealogy* journal had articles about [retracing African trade routes](#) from Marseille, France, [unsettling](#) settler family's history in Aotearoa New Zealand, and [re-unlearning](#) and relearning discourses of healing in a tribally placed doctoral cohort. *The Hidden Branch* [interviewed Carly Bagley](#), who calls herself a "public historian and an aspirational cool, millennial, genealogist, older-sister-type." Stacy Hawkes of *Dividing Ridge Genealogy* had posts about the [art of handwriting](#) and the [value of memories](#). *Deseret* [noted](#) that FamilySearch wants a free and all [virtual](#) RootsTech in 2022. Others noted that Aussies are [being encouraged](#) to opt into the census time capsule, [why to add](#) trees to DNA, and why occupations are [important to genealogists](#). These are only some of the many articles.

There are important stories when it comes to history worth noting in this newsletter. LOC [shared images](#) from the Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information (FSA/OWI) collection, [China's colossal encyclopedia](#), and had other posts on the [burial urns](#) of Santa Maria and the royal geographer [Nicolas de Ferthe](#). Others wrote about public health and venereal disease in Hot Springs, Arkansas, [before the Tuskegee Study](#), the relationship [among “radical socialism](#), Islamic balanced reform and Tatar national identity in early twentieth-century Russia,” and the [education of African children](#) in “countries that were colonized by Britain.” Apart from this were articles about topics such as [Lafayette’s plan to invade Ireland](#), [North Carolina’s response](#) to the battles of Lexington and Concord, the postwar struggles of one female veteran [of World War I](#), the [importance of Caribbean history](#), and [Sarah Tate’s resistance](#) interconnected with consumerism and curation of her own items.

*Smithsonian* magazine had articles on many topics. Some were on [mercury poisoning in the copper age](#), [how an amateur geologist](#) created her own cabinet of curiosities, archaeologists finding a lost 4,500 year old [Egyptian sun temple](#), and how the ancient Romans [went to the bathroom](#). Other articles were about the [influence of the automobile](#), artifacts from Chinese transcontinental railroad workers [found](#) in Utah, why [dragons dominated](#) the landscape of medieval monsters, a 3,500 Babylonian tablet perhaps the earliest known [ghost image](#), and [research](#) which highlights Smithsonian’s “successful repatriation of Sitting Bull’s leggings and lock of hair to his direct descendants.” I also liked reading about [how historians decide](#) who is the “worst” President, the [long history](#) of the espresso machine, and how women [were encouraged](#) in the 1960s to “seek employment in computing by appealing to traditional domestic roles,” not taking into account women had been in the field since the 1940s, but were shut out of upper management as men remained as managers.

That brings me to the last part of this newsletter. Some articles talked about astrophysicists [detecting a black hole](#) gobbling up a neutron star, [recommendations](#) of what to watch after finishing *The Aquatope on the White Sand*, with *Bartender*, *Sweetness and Lightning*, *Princess Jellyfish*, *Ristorante Paradiso*, and *Barakamon* listed as possible anime shows to watch. Google News Initiative announced a “LGBTQ+ language and media literacy program” but did [not include](#) the words pansexual, bisexual, and Two-Spirit. Later this was updated to add “bisexual,” “pansexual,” but not Two-Spirit while offensive words remained.

There were also articles arguing that a non-binary *Cowboy Bebop* character [is wronged](#) in the live-action version, [anti-racist moderation](#), [how video games](#) can change the world for domestic violence survivors, the quest to shoot an arrow farther [than anyone has before](#), [reviewing](#) how John Steinbeck portrays oppression, and [a positive review](#) of the current animated series, *Arcane*. Others talked [about racism](#) among White people, art installations [made out of car wreckage](#) serving as “high-impact designated driver reminders,” how driving to save time [slows everyone down](#), how COVID [changed science](#), [volatile organic compounds](#), the environmental [damage](#) of a Bitcoin power plant, using the descriptor “disabled people” rather than [anything else](#), and research showing that labor unions [help lower the risk of poverty](#). Hathcock, who has been mentioned earlier in this newsletter, had two posts, one about [spiritual solitude](#) and [urging information professionals](#) to have a “responsibility to bring a critical lens to every instance of our work,” not erasing “difficult or oppressive histories from the materials we collect and preserve”

and adding that “there is no neutrality in that kind of whitewashing of history, only more oppression.”



*Dr. Jha (voiced by Anisha Nagarajan) at the end of a recent episode of gen:LOCK, enticed by the allure of the Union.*

*The Nib* had wonderful illustrations as always. There were about [capitalism](#), [drug use](#), [selfish billionaires](#), [parentism](#) over the ages, [Africa pointing](#) its finger at Western countries to quit oil and gas first, [career aptitude](#), some intellectuals accepting [some fascist imagery](#), and [people mocking](#) what others wear. Others had illustrations about astronauts which will be wearing diapers because [there are no toilets](#) on Elon Musk’s SpaceX capsule, [tangling](#) of a secular government with religious ideas, [virtual reality](#), [lock down](#) in Australia, [comic drawing](#), [anger management](#), [delivery drivers](#), [parenting](#), and the GOP [fighting vaccine mandates](#) and then blaming Biden for the rise in COVID cases.

That's all for this week! Hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Pop culture reviews, CIA covert ops, archival records, leaving the library profession dialog, and racism of the American populace

This week's "too long for email" newsletter will provide the latest news about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and more

*[Newsletter originally published [on December 7, 2021](#)]*



*When you blush when seeing your librarian friend. This is from The Owl House, specifically the episode "Through the Looking Glass Ruins"*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week! I've been prolific, writing a post about [the fictional library of George and Lance](#) in *She-Ra and the Princesses of Power*, and asking whether Peridot, in one of my favorite series, *Steven Universe*, is an unintentional archivist, records management, [or something else entirely](#). I wrote [another review for Bubble Blabber](#). For *The Geekiary* I wrote several reviews. One was on the little-known indie animated series, *Ollie & Scoops*, [which has a cat](#) as one of its protagonists, and another [about the comic](#), *Odd Worlds*. I was glad to see that the author of that webcomic [said](#) she was "super happy" to see a review of her webcomic. I wish her the best and hope to see more of her comics in the future. I also was pleased to see that the 1,824 document set from the NSA, *CIA Covert Operations IV: The Eisenhower Years, 1953-1962*, which "features thousands of declassified documents detailing

the extremely active period of CIA clandestine missions throughout the Eisenhower presidency" [is out](#), since it's a set I worked on earlier this year! I especially worked on documents about the 1954 CIA coup in Guatemala and the aftermath. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

That brings me to archives. My colleagues at [NSA highlighted](#) a "declassified 1976 cable sent from Ambassador to Argentina, Robert Hill, to Acting Assistant Secretary of State Hewson Ryan...[which] warns against a potential meeting between Secretary Kissinger and Argentine military counterparts on the eve of the 1976 coup d'état against Isabel Perón as President of Argentina." Otherwise, there were posts about a librarian [who "helms efforts](#) to make archival holdings accessible online" and hosts a radio show, an author who discussed how "feminist care ethics and collections as data research [intersect](#) in a digital humanities project," [community input](#) for web archiving at small and rural libraries, and [ethical approaches](#) to youth data in historical web archives. There were additionally posts, such as Margot Note noting [possible privacy concerns](#) in archival records, Jennifer Snoek-Brown of *Reel Librarians* talked about the brief scenes [in libraries and archives](#) in the 2020 film *Soul*, especially noting the "soul archives" in the film, and another, from an archivist, about the story of the Tulsa Massacre in 1921 [from archival records](#).

I enjoyed reading Kaye Lanning Minchew [talk about](#) an author who was once an archivist for 32 years, how a climate archive/record in Majorca [can say something](#) about "how sea level has risen significantly over the past 100 years after thousands of years of little change," [the importance](#) of defining what records are, and the story, [from archival records](#), of Madame Menaka and the Indian hockey team in Berlin in 1936. The same can be said about the Diplomatic Instructions, 1785-1906 and Consular Instructions, 1801-1834 records from the Department of State [are now online](#) and in the NARA catalog, SAA President Courtney Chartier [talking about](#) the value of strategic planning and a new Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Work Plan, and putting the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials [to work](#) when "rearranging and inventorying the extensive photograph collection of the National Parks Service's Southeast Archeological Center." There were posts from the /r/Archivists subreddit [about preserving](#) a significant newspaper, [favorite cloud-based software](#), [referencing](#) in catalogs, [checking](#) occurrences of dates, the best photo format [for web diffusion](#), and [materials](#) to use for preserving records.

When it comes to libraries, there was interesting news in the past week. There was a letter by Wayne A. Wiegand which called out the ALA, as I [noted on Twitter](#), "for whitewashing it's [sic] past problematic history, in an anti-racist statement, and calling for the ALA to establish a committee on racism." Jasmine Lelis Clark [had a thread](#) about the "leaving the profession" dialog about those who are leaving the library profession, noting that those who eliminated benefits for library workers should be held accountable, stated that the trend for leaving the library profession trend is way of saying that people aren't paid enough for the work they do, which is true. She concluded that librarianship was something many went into because "they liked its ideals (or didn't hate them), the stakes were reasonable, the pay was more-or-less fine, & the drama was annoying at worst" but that changed, and people are protesting it. There were a plethora of responses and quote tweets to each of those tweets, which I am not going to

summarize here, but I'd recommend you go through them all. Otherwise, I was intrigued to come across [an American Libraries piece](#) about decolonizing the catalog and antiracist description, interviewing [Elizabeth Hobart](#), [Staci Ross](#), [Michelle Cronquist](#), and [Kelly Farrell](#) on this topic.

<https://youtu.be/E7sl4nltFC0>

There are other stories about libraries which are worth noting. Jennifer Snoek-Brown [shared reel librarian titles](#) for December 2021 she has added to her blog, *Reel Librarians*, while We Here noted a four-week course they are offering [about curating library exhibitions](#), and Mark Swenson [talked about](#) the cost of knowing our users. There were other assorted posts about librarians who [serve youth](#) in their communities, [the “human library,”](#) librarians and educators [warning](#) of organized book banning efforts, an improved library [bringing joy](#) of books to kids, and [beach libraries](#). There was an always relevant post from April Hathcock, this one saying that some White professionals thought it was “too militant” to use the words “White supremacy,” adding that [White people dislike](#) the words racism, White supremacy, White privilege, or any reference to Whiteness. I’ll get more to that in the history section of this newsletter, which really shows those attitudes in full force.

On a different topic, the Library of Congress (LOC) had wonderful posts as always. They were about a [17th century Korean map of the world](#), [tenement house committee maps](#), [cotton mortgages](#) and the Lehman Brothers, [legal professions](#) in Cambodia, [“Pérouse”-ing the Pacific](#), and [waiting](#) with Jonathan Larson. What interested me more than these posts, was, as always, interviews with interns. This included an interview [with Yunzhou Wang](#), a foreign law intern, and another [with Jade Vaughan](#), one of the 2021 Music Division interns from the Archives, History and Heritage Advanced internship program. There were profiles of the [remote metadata interns this past fall](#), specifically Heather Agnew, Julie Carlson, Elizabeth (Liz) Carter, Jamila Davey, Stephanie Duran, Krista Evilsizor, Brian Godfrey, Danielle Herring, Sabrina Holecko, Renée LaCapria-Harper, Rebecca Lemon, Sarah Lyons, Lucas Madrigal, Ivanna Moreno, Courtney Nomiyama, Gerald Perriman, Jill Pow, Hassna Ramadan, Hollan Read, Deborah Revzin, Hillary “Echo” Rue, Alya J. Sarna, Jericho Savage, Christinna Swearingen, Rebecca Vasquez, Mara Wessel, Stephanie Williams, and Reid E. Yaworski. Best of luck to all of them!

Having addressed some of the most important news about libraries, I’d like to move onto genealogy. *Genealogy* journal had an [article on genealogy’s assumptions](#) about written records and originality, along with others about topics such as: [structural violence of schooling](#) and [development](#) of the genealogical FamilySearch database. There were other scattered genealogy-related articles about [connections between](#) Georgia and Tipperary, Ireland, [analyzing](#) a complex challenge on a FamilySearch tree, [finding](#) a woman’s maiden name, the [importance](#) of a name, [storytelling](#) in Appalachia, and [discussing](#) family secrets with children. There were, again, [more reviews](#) of Kate Moore’s book about Elizabeth Packard, one of my ancestors.

We then come to history, the last section of this article before the end of this newsletter. The [Civil Rights Movement Archive](#) had a listing of [public opinion polls on the movement](#) from 1961

to 1969. Many are very disturbing. In May 1961, 61% of Americans disapproved of the actions of the Freedom Riders, 57% disapproved of sit-ins and claimed they would hurt Black people's chances at integration. A few years later, 71% said they thought Martin Luther King, Jr. was moving at the right speed at getting equal rights for Black people, and many Black people said they would take part in a peaceful parade for that aim. At the same time, 60% said mass demonstrations by Black people supposedly "hurt" their cause, were unfavorable to the March on Washington, and felt riots by Black people in 1964 "hurt" their cause. Even worse was an October 1964 poll where 73% said that Black people should stop demonstrating, and even over 60% of Black people opposed school boycotts. Additionally, over 50% in March 1965 disapproved of clergy involving themselves in fighting for civil rights, wanted the demonstrations to be nonviolent, and almost 50% absurdly thought communists had been involved in the demonstrations. By December 1966, over 50% claimed that MLK was hurting the Black push for civil rights, said in January 1967 that Black people would be better off if "they would take advantage of the opportunities that have been made available rather than spending so much time protesting." Almost 50% of Black folks in May 1969 said they would have taken part in a sit-in, a demonstration, and less than 50% said they would picket a store. However, over 70% said that "sit ins, demonstrations, picketing a store, stop buying at a store, going to jail" helped Black people "in their effort to win their rights." Even so, many disapproved of Black students carrying guns on school campuses. Then, in June 1969, almost half of American men said that Black protesters are "looking for trouble"! This shows that anti-Black racism was very integrated into American society, even more than what some would like to admit.

USE THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES ORDINANCE  
Cut this out and send it in.

COMPLAINT OF DISCRIMINATION

Name and Address \_\_\_\_\_

Time and Date of Discrimination \_\_\_\_\_

Name and/or Address of person discriminating \_\_\_\_\_

Remarks (further information, witnesses, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

Complaint of discrimination section of [c. March 1964 CORE News](#)

There is much more than that one pdf. The *Journal of American Revolution* had articles about how race [united the colonies](#) and made the Declaration of Independence, the [two sieges](#) of Louisbourg, loyalist prisoners [in the aftermath](#) of Kings Mountain, how Ancient America [is ignored](#), [a review](#) of a book on the Jewish world of Alexander Hamilton, [how](#) John Adams loved cider, and [Major Robert Rogers](#) and the American Revolution. Just as important was Paul Michael Warden's article on [yellow fever, the Antebellum Gulf South, and German immigration](#), [the Mayflower compact](#) and 17th century corporations (not the same as today's corporations), and Nazis basing their elite schools [on top British private schools](#), with a "blizzard of reciprocal exchanges between British and German schools" between 1934 and 1939. There were posts on

[child abandonment in England, 1741–1834](#), [father role representations](#) in the 1980s and the new millennium, and the fact that Johannes Gutenberg, was a source of printing, but “key innovations in what would become revolutionary printing technology [began in east Asia, with work done by Chinese nobles](#), Korean Buddhists, and the descendants of Genghis Khan—and...their work began several centuries before Johannes Gutenberg was even born...Perhaps it should be Choe Yun-ui whose name we remember, not Gutenberg’s.” The same article says that “the fantastical idea that Gutenberg alone invented the printing press ignores an entire continent and several centuries of relevant efforts and makes no effort to understand how or why technology might have spread.” The commenters are moderately to extremely hostile to the article, but I thought it was an interesting read.

There are articles in the *Smithsonian* magazine, whether on [bison in Canada](#), the [vis-o-matic in the 1950s](#), a [18th century watercolor](#) of a Black woman, bringing the forgotten history of Black firefighting to life with [records and stories](#), a [behind the scenes look](#) at the new National Museum of the American Latino, the split at the 1977 Conference on Women’s Rights [which continues](#) to have ramifications, and [reviving](#) Indigenous food cultures. There were many additional articles on topics such as Black [classical music composers](#), [myths](#) of the term “crusader,” [scientific history](#) of glass, archaeologists coming upon a map [of the capital](#) of the Mongolian empire, Berlin memorials [which honor](#) Black Holocaust victims, and climate change [as the culprit](#) in the collapse of Ancient Chinese culture.

There are articles which don’t fit neatly into the other parts of this newsletter. This includes [a Teen Vogue article](#) about the Boys’ love genre, also known as yaoi, described as a queer fantasy which “chooses what to take or ignore from reality and how to incorporate real positives or negatives into the fantasy world,” and another [about Barbados](#) on the verge of planning a heritage district on transatlantic slavery. There were posts by Stitch about [the importance of critically consuming media](#) and not following the lead of those think that such criticism is hooey, along with her [links](#) on various subjects like [Whiteness inherent](#) in *Lord of the Rings*, [debates](#) about language to use to respect disabled people, framing [fandom history](#), how Marvel [is courting](#) K-Culture, the [story of Nine Mae McKinney](#), one of the earliest Black female stars in Hollywood, the fast food industry’s [continuing pursuit](#) to get Black people to buy into their products, and [why people](#) hate celebrities.

Apart from this, *Al Jazeera* [noted](#) that Biden called for intellectual property waivers on COVID vaccines while WTO negotiations are “deadlocked over a proposal by India and South Africa to waive intellectual property (IP) rights for COVID-19 vaccines and supplies,” with the E.U., UK, and Switzerland opposing that, and some criticizing the U.S. for not doing enough to provide vaccines to poorer parts of the world. *Anime News Network* reported that music from the popular Macross series [will be available](#) in November 2022, while others talked about [human oversight](#) of A.I. systems, how China’s imperial legacies [are creating](#) a new Chinese identity, [the possibility](#) of a *Futurama* reboot, [trivia](#) for the upcoming *Adventure Time* Fionna and Cake spinoff, [impact](#) of socioeconomic class on family life, and Disney characters [which should](#) get their own spin offs. Hathcock, on the other hand, [wrote about](#) visiting Africa as a Black person, sometimes seeing neo-colonialism and White supremacy.

*Smithsonian* magazine has articles about the U.S. [returning more than 900 artifacts](#) to Mali, the world's first "living robots" [now able](#) to reproduce, an analysis stating that the Arctic could become dominated by rain instead of snow [within decades](#), a look [inside the nests](#) of prairie songbirds (which are on the decline), a new species of dinosaur unearthed [in Chile](#), astronomers [confirming](#) an elusive third type of supernova, the Hubble Telescope's [photos](#) of the solar system and outer planets.

There, as always, wonderful illustrations from *The Nib*, either about a Black people [being called](#) the n-word, [how suffragists succeeded](#) in the pandemic, [family reunion](#), Teddy Roosevelt statue finding a home [in North Dakota](#), [the history](#) of meatless meat, [the history](#) of the conflict in Palestine, the faultiness of self-care [at times](#), payment processors [cracking down](#) on pornographic material, and [changing seasons](#). Others focused on the not-so-secret [nukes of Israel](#), story of person [who claimed](#) there was election fraud in 2020 voted twice, the problems [with depending](#) on the courts for "justice," [weak action](#) on climate change, [less popular](#) gods and goddesses, [post-pandemic](#) fantasies, and [people living](#) in lands of delusion.

That's all for this week! Hope you all have a productive week ahead!

- Burkely

# Pop culture, archives, preservation, libraries, genealogy, and beyond!

This week, I'll share with you some of the latest and newest articles about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and other topics in this "too long for email" newsletter

*[Newsletter originally published [on December 15, 2021](#)]*



*Isa, Elena, Naomi, and Gabe in the royal library in an episode of Elena of Avalor*

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a good week. I've been a bit prolific recently, first with a post noting [recently listed titles](#) with libraries and librarians. This was followed by [a review](#) of another of my favorite webcomics, a post [about the differences](#) between archivists and librarians and why they aren't the same, a post about a transgender librarian [in one of my favorite animated series](#). There was also [a review](#) of a surprisingly diverse Star Wars animated series and [a review](#) of another webcomic, which was published today. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

I'd like to talk about archives first. My colleagues at NSA explained how the LBJ Library [administratively closed](#) MDR (mandatory review requests) because the original agencies never bothered to respond, with my colleague Lauren Harper [explaining it more](#). Agencies receiving those requests [are “expected](#) to conduct a line-by-line review of the record(s) for public access and...release the information to the requestor” unless that information cannot be released [under specific](#) legal [requirements](#). On another archives-related topic is a blogpost by David Ferriero,

the head of NARA, about the creation of a Chief Equity Officer and a Chief Diversity Officer in order to “[advance equity and integrate the principles](#)” of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility.” It remains to be seen whether measures like these will result in a “diverse and equitable NARA” as Ferriero is aiming for, or not.

Other than this, I liked reading the review about memory and graffiti in the video game *Fallout: New Vegas*, by Myra Khan [in The American Archivist Reviews Portal](#), a look inside Smithsonian’s storerooms by *National Geographic*, and an article on the Black History Gallery, a small museum [which is preserving](#) stories of civil rights activists. Just as important is [the release](#) of the Department of State territorial papers from 1789 to 1873, NARA’s continued commitment to the [release of the 1950 census](#) next year despite the pandemic (which genealogists will like to see), and the importance of [preserving](#) Southern history. At the same time, I loved seeing that *Watermelon Woman* is entering [the Library of Congress \(LOC\) National Film Registry](#) and it may be the push I need to finally watch the film, which I described in [my September 19 newsletter](#) as “poignant enough in terms of connections to archival concepts” to write about. And sure, there was [an intriguing archivist spotlight](#) by Sam Cross on *Pop Archives* about Julianna Blake in the video game *Deathloop*. There is, once again, [another issue of Brimstone and Roses](#) which featured the recordkeeper, Yuwei, requesting a mind wipe from the Warden but this request being denied.

There’s additional posts about [cataloging](#) at the National Archives in the UK, articles about Archives Administration 100 Years [after Jenkinson’s Manual](#), deconstructive [intersectionality and praxis](#), and case studies which [demonstrate the “value](#) and possibilities of [a] participatory documentation initiative.” Of note is the *Lighting the Way Handbook* which [has “case studies, guidelines, and emergent futures](#)” about “archival discovery and delivery.” A new book, *Archival Virtue: Relationship, Obligation, and the Just Archives*, [seems fascinating](#) as it “explores ideas of moral commitment, truth, difference, and just behavior in the pursuit of archival ideals.” Just as fascinating is Andrew Egan [considering the “challenges](#) that face shuttered newspapers with decades or even centuries of material to preserve,” and utilizing university archives [to teach](#) that “neutrality does not exist in the archives” and how to use primary sources. Others talked about archiving social media “[evidence of atrocity crimes](#),” [game preservation](#), [converting images](#) to excel tables, [options](#) for dehumidifiers in archives, and suggestions for [accessioning tax papers](#).

The [newest issue](#) of *The American Archivist* is worth noting, as it focuses on writing, design records, digital collections, born-digital records, archival appraisal, copyright, archival decolonization, the role of gender in archival work, and imposter syndrome in the profession. Other articles talk about social justice, recordkeeping cultures, preservation, record-keeping in early societies, preservation, innovation, vertical history of information (i.e. the filing cabinet), and knowledge under attack.



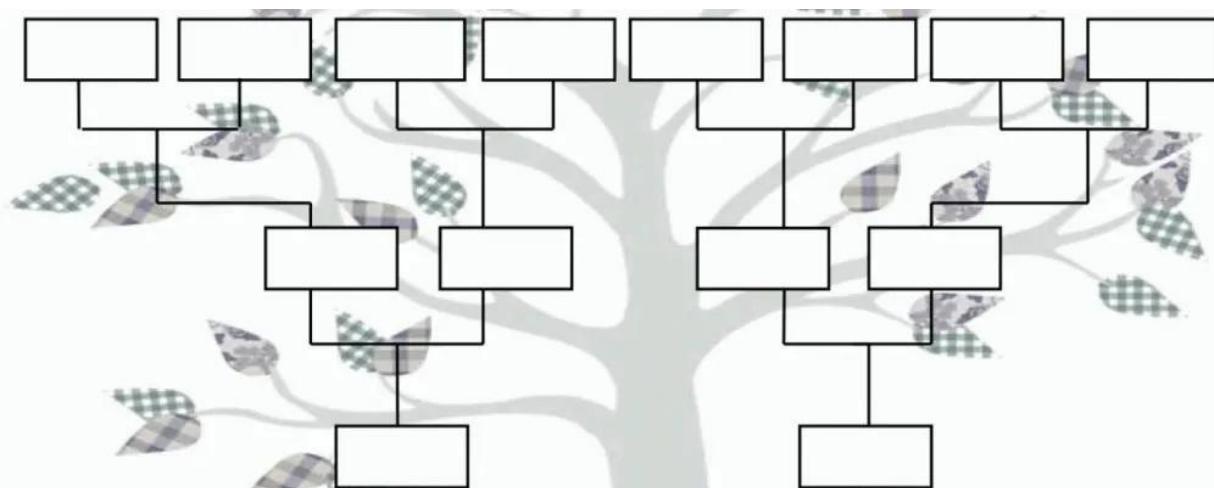
*In the fifth episode of Star Wars Rebels, the Inquisitor uses the “complete” archival records at the Jedi Temple in order to know the fighting style of Kanan Jarus in hopes of beating him. This is a reference to Jocasta Nu saying in Attack of the Clones that the archives are “complete.”*

There are a variety of articles about libraries. LOC has articles [about tips](#) for teenage researchers, [conservation treatment](#) of an 1842 Chinese scroll map, and [researcher stories](#) about Civil War photographs, “Chlorophyll Prints” and Robert Schultz. Additionally, [Hack Library School](#) had posts about [invisible disabilities](#) and library school, [time management](#), [digital humanities tools](#) that librarians should know about, [reflections](#) on library school, and the countless benefits of a [thank you folder](#). Alex Skoptic talks about the [war on reading](#) by the prison system in the U.S., NPR wrote about [new pressure](#) to ban books at schools, while NYPL [shared views](#) of the Empire State building within their digital collections. Of note is the value of interns [in library settings](#), [mobile libraries in Scotland](#), [censorship and harassment](#) of an author after their book was banned in a Texas school district, assessment of reading habits of public library users [in the digital era](#), how Viacom [forced](#) the Internet Archive to remove hundreds of hours of MTV broadcasts from 1981 to 1991, and digital librarians [sharing](#) how users can protect themselves online.

OCLC focused on [shared cataloging](#) of the California Digital Library, and [an opinion piece](#) making an economic case for public libraries in the UK. In an August 2018 post, April Hathcock wrote about making an “effort to seek out those most marginalized and carve out a place of welcome in these spaces in which we work,” [saying that](#) we would all share in such labor, treating people with dignity, looking at your biases, not making assumptions about people, going beyond existing norms, and engaging in microaffirmations, i.e. “those small acts of encouragement and solidarity that show a marginalized person that you acknowledge and respect their belonging in the space.” There were assorted tweets about [why we should be worried](#) about fascists on a library board, [not stopping](#) when reading a book aloud, and publishers [making a lot](#) of money when libraries buy books.

That brings me to genealogy. I liked reading about [the legacy](#) of the CCC, an expert warning about [the pitfalls](#) of giving DNA tests as holiday gifts, [family secrets, genealogy](#) as family history, and [an illustration](#) about how direct-to-consumer DNA testing may “mean the end to family secrets” and its inherent dangers. There were articles about a disclosed data breach of a DNA testing firm [affecting 21 million people](#), [preparing](#) for a research trip, [disproving](#) the racist lie that Black families can’t be traced before 1870, and genetic genealogy [for the digital age](#). Genealogy journal had articles on an author [connecting](#) with their BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) ancestors, intergenerational wounding and healing [from the perspective](#) of someone descended from those “affected by the trans-Atlantic slave trade” and what it [means to be Black](#) with an interracial family tree.

Just as valuable is how genealogy can be a gift [rooted in family history](#), [analyzing](#) a complex challenge on the FamilySearch family tree, the 1666-1667 New France [Census](#), the good, bad, and ugly [in genealogy](#), and a basic Holocaust [study guide](#).



A typical family tree chart, via [the Augusta County Library](#)

Connected and related to genealogy is history. *Heritage Daily* had posts about [species of pseudo horses](#) 37 million years ago, [ancient Islamic tombs](#), and [discovery](#) from a unicorn cave in Lower Saxony. *Perspectives on History* had articles on fusing [journalism and history](#), historians as [expert witnesses](#), and [turning sentiments](#) into action. Historian Graham Harding wrote about champagne and the performance of femininity [in Victorian Britain](#). Early America historian Crystal Weber [explained how](#) reproductive rights was a form of resistance for enslaved women. Priya Chhaya provided resources to [learn more](#) about LGBTQ spaces through context statements and mapping. *The Daily Maverick* [asked](#) if Britain helped murder an African leader and UN Secretary-General using declassified documents. Historian Emiliano Aguilar [analyzed](#) failed utopian visions in East Chicago. Genealogy journal had articles on the reciprocity between continental and diasporic Africans’ [struggles for freedom](#) and [pan-Africanism](#), with the pursuit of a united Africa.

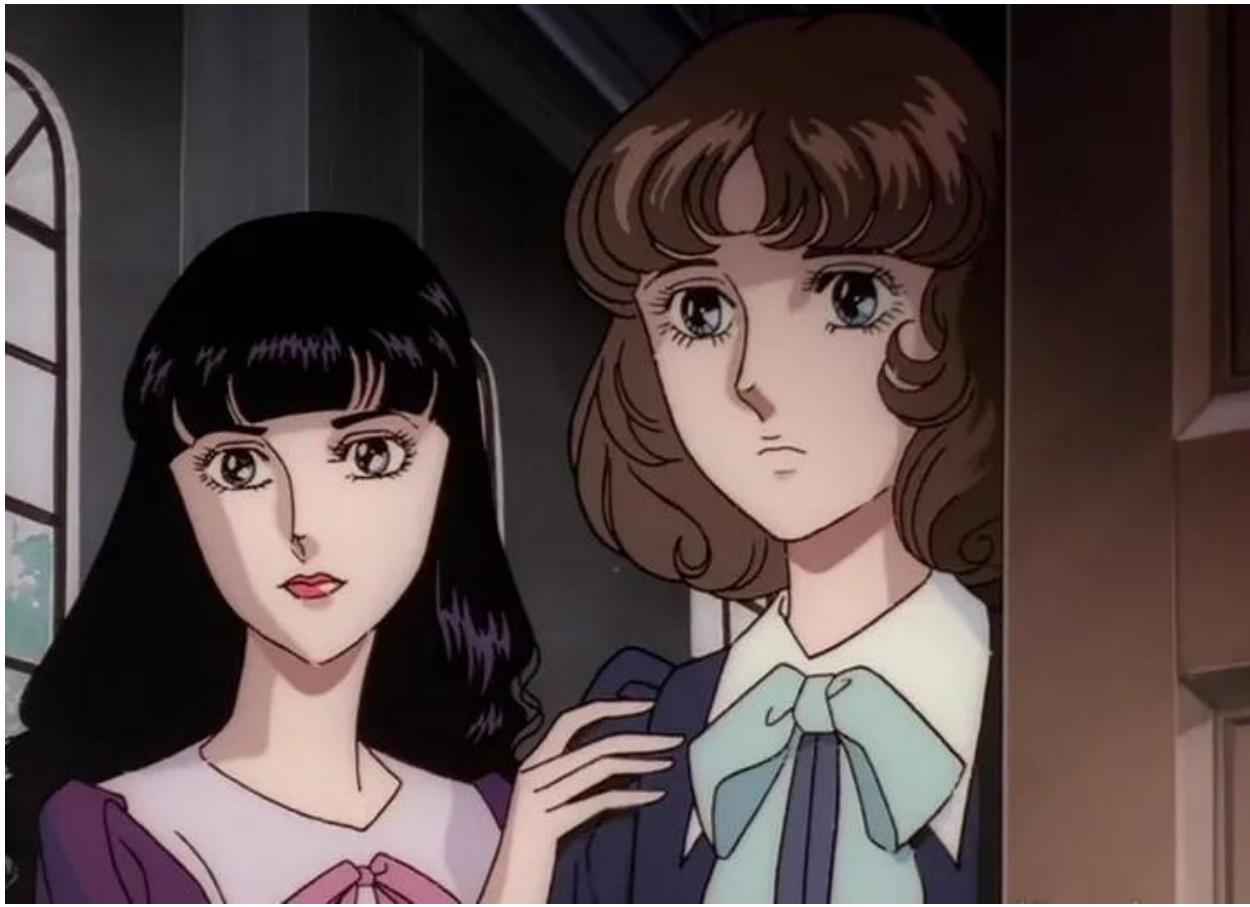
*Smithsonian* magazine, for their part, had fascinating articles. Some were about [rare Roman mosaics](#), [deer bone carvings](#), [early colonial Boston coins](#), and [Egyptian jewelry](#). Others focused

on a record-setting Latine player [named Marge Villa](#), a civilian worker [who spearheaded](#) Pearl Harbor's most successful rescue mission, [the history](#) of the breakup album, determining whether Vikings [tortured victims](#) with a brutal blood eagle or not, and [how volcanic eruptions](#) helped ancestral Pueblo culture flourish. Most intriguing of all, however, was a post about [folk speech of the LGBTQ community](#) with people resorting to coded speech as a safeguard, when they asked people, for instance, if they were a "[friend of Dorothy](#)."

In other articles, the magazine talked explained how Tichkemate was [a favorite](#) at the Smithsonian, said hello to a scientist [harvesting clues](#) about ancient gourds and maize, noted archaeologists [finding](#) an ancient fortress, an [old English coin](#), a 1200 year canoe [found](#) in a Wisconsin lake, [asked](#) what Tudor England looks, smells, and sounds like, and noted ancient Sicilian dwarf elephants [which diverged](#) from a colossal ancestor. There were, additionally, articles about archaeologists unearthing slave quarters at [a Pompeian villa](#), a 4,000-year-old snake staff [discovered](#) in Finland, and ancient footprints which [may have belonged](#) to an unknown human ancestor.

On a totally different topic is one of the biggest stories of the past week: [the outage](#) of Amazon Web Services (AWS). It was said to take down "[huge parts](#)" of the internet, and a [host of websites](#). So, I did a little research into it, and it turns out that companies such as Adobe, Airbnb, Disney, *The Guardian*, Lonely Planet, NASA (specifically their image and video library), Netflix, Reddit, Samsung, Pfizer, Sony, Facebook, General Electric, Dow Jones / Wall Street Journal, Pinterest, Eventbrite, IMDB, Southwest, Blackboard, Choice Hotels, LexisNexis, and FOX all use AWS! This is according to [Digital Dimensions](#), [Yahoo! Finance](#), [Intellipat](#), and [AWS's website](#). Clearly the outage of AWS has a massive impact on the internet itself. Most concerning is NARA's relationship with AWS, including [releasing data](#) from the NARA catalog to them, and the catalog itself [running on AWS](#)!

I was disappointed to see *The Diamondback* [confuse the two names](#) of South Asian women who are part of the SGA, and they apologized for this, but it isn't the only time they have messed up, as they previously made errors [on another story](#). It makes you think, what other errors and issues have they made? It really lowers your confidence [and trust](#) in the paper, especially since [five editors](#) let the incorrect story [which mixed](#) up the names of the women [pass by](#) and they fired the reporter who wrote the article, the [easy thing](#) for them to do rather than make bigger changes.



Mariko Shinobu and Nanako Misonoo in the 1991-1992 anime *Dear Brother*

In the past week, BuzzFeed [put together](#) a list of what they consider forty of the best LGBTQ characters in anime. While their definition of anime is pretty broad, of those they list, I am familiar with Tomoyo Daidouji, and Toya Kinomoto & Yukito Tsukihiro in *Cardcaptor Sakura*, Sailor Neptune & Sailor Uranus in *Sailor Moon*, Utena Tenjou in *Revolutionary Girl Utena*, Asami Soto & Avatar Korra in *Legend of Korra*, and Ilia Amitola in *RWBY*, although I have not watched *Legend of Korra*. Related to this is a review of [five anime & manga who truly understand disability](#), none of which I have watched as of yet, [10 best comics of 2021](#) according to *Polygon*, only one of which I've read: *The Girl From the Sea* (which was very sad), and [best TV shows of 2021](#) according to the same site. Of those listed on there, I've watched *Arcane*, and *Never Have I Ever*, but not *Invincible*, and *Tuca & Bertie*. I probably will watch some more episodes of [Dear Brother](#), otherwise known as *Oniisama e...*, or some [boy's love anime](#), in the coming year as well, along with many other series.

There was also a story in *The Hustle* about [the resurgence of vinyl records](#), which I was somewhat exposed to when I helped my parents sell some old vinyl records they had, *Wired* on [a scientific screw up](#) sixty years old which helped COVID kill, [a post](#) about a journey of someone coming out as pansexual, or articles about [polyamorous](#) and [open](#) relationships. Anime News Network reported that Seven Seas Entertainment licensed the yuri manga [The Summer You Were There](#), [Candy & Cigarettes](#), [Shwd](#), and *Yokai Cats*. *Scalwag Magazine* had an article on

sanitation issues [in New Orleans](#), whether [the latter city has recovered](#) from Katrina (it hasn't) and now Ida, and *Facing South* on bracing for a South after *Roe v. Wade* in "[the region's last three abortion-safe states](#)" (Florida, North Carolina, and Virginia). *Walled Culture* had articles on how academics are [losing control](#) of their papers [due to copyright](#). *The Artifice* [analyzed](#) how music can "fare as a form for fantasy" and the legacy [of Ramona Quimby](#), ancient diamonds [that "show](#) Earth was primed for life's explosion at least 2.7 billion years ago." *Genealogy* journal had articles on [using language](#) to negotiate the politics of gender and [one hundred years](#) of a Japanese American's family mortuary.

*Smithsonian* magazine, on the other hand, had articles [about Leonard](#), the brightest comet of the year, the [evolution of a comet](#), the Great Pacific Garbage Patch [in the open ocean](#), and new research which "could [shed light](#) on how the circuits in our own minds work." Hathcock, for her part, talked about, in [an April 2018 post](#), what she called ghost syndrome, defining it as "the pervasive and often substantiated belief that your contributions have been co-opted by a colleague who is more male, more white, and better resourced than you are," saying it has racialized and gendered aspects, and argues that it "makes you feel like maybe you don't exist."

*The Nib* had wonderful illustrations as always. Some [criticized Kellogg's](#) for its attempts to employ scabs and weaken the strike, while others focused on [conservative propaganda](#) which goes round and round, [rebelling](#) from the "rebel girl" trope, this year's ugliest [holiday sweaters](#), [hugging](#), and those who stormed the Capital [blaming](#) police brutality as a defense. Other comics focused on [pyramid schemes](#), a hedge fund manager [turning over](#) millions of dollars in stolen antiques to avoid trial, [brief history](#) of the toothbrush, holidays [at the White House](#), a [family loss](#), [novelty](#) advent calendars, a [family heirloom](#), effects of the abortion decision on the [upcoming](#) midterm elections, the history of [kitty litter](#), [thousands](#) of years of abortion history, and [the life](#) of Dr. Magnus Hirschfeld. In the land of comics, Noelle Stevenson, the non-binary and trans creator of the newish She-Ra series had comics about [games being used](#) to explore gender, a [dog chasing a ball](#), [receiving praise](#), and mis-remembering [the name](#) of an actress. Their wife, Molly Ostertag, talked about her [gay energy](#) and shared the [first chapter](#) of her novel *The Darkest Night*.

That's all for this week! I hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Pop culture reviews, preservation, libraries, immigration control, genealogy, and more!

In this "too long for email" newsletter, I'll be sharing the latest news about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, a new candidate for the ALA presidency, and beyond!

*[Newsletter originally published [on December 22, 2021](#)]*



*Callum blushes when seeing Claudia in the library in The Dragon Prince*

Hello everyone! I hope you are all having a good week. I was glad to see Tapas [noting my article](#) which highlighted a webcomic, *Ryder*. Last Thursday, I published a post about archivists of color [on my blog](#) about archives in popular culture, and Monday I published [another review](#) of a mature animated series. Yesterday I published [a post](#) about the library in *Kokoro Library*, and today I had reviews of a webcomic, [The Pirate and the Princess](#), and of the anime series, [Eden's Zero](#) published. With that, let me move onto the rest of this newsletter. As an aside, here's [a cute account](#) about a cat walking around a model train yard.

Let me start with archives. On the one hand it was interesting to read about how Mark Meadows [tried to skirt](#) federal records retention policies, undoubtedly because was "doing something illegal and traitorous" as [Holly Croft put it](#). On the other hand, Christopher J. Morten, Reshma

Ramachandran, Joseph S. Ross, and Amy Kapczynski [argued](#) that the FDA needs to reform its data sharing practices, and historian Nicholas Scott Baker [lamented](#) the “slow death of Italy’s archives” as he described it. On another topic, my colleague at the NSA, William Burr, [wrote about](#) strategic stability and instability during the middle years of the Cold War using declassified presidential, State Department, federal, and otherwise archival records.

There were posts on /r/Archivists about [job requirements](#) for working with NARA, whether analog video techs [are still](#) needed in the workforce, someone [looking to find a scanner](#) for books, and physical [storage of digital items](#). While it seemed exciting that Cambridge University hired an archivist to “[catalog 160 boxes of Stephen Hawking’s work](#),” I would say more than one person should be hired for that job, perhaps have a whole team of people. Other articles focused on [capturing and archiving](#) MiniDV Tapes on macOS and the ICA Roma 2022 Conference which will focus on “archives [as a means](#) of bridging a transversal and multi-level gap.”

I was intrigued by last week’s word of the week: [embedded archivist](#). It means, quite simply, an archivist who “facilitates the appraisal and preservation of records of enduring value by closely observing or becoming involved in the work of records creators” or an archivist who “collaborates extensively with an instructor who is teaching a course with or about archives.” Such archivists, as the page says, “become involved in organizations in order to develop relationships, better understand the records of an organization, or participate in documentation efforts.”

I look forward to reading the responses to [today’s SNAP chat](#) which takes time to “reflect on another year in the pandemic and how it has affected us and our work as archivists.” It was held on December 22 at 8 PM Eastern Time (7 PM Central Time, 6 PM Mountain Time, 5 PM Pacific Time). Grace Brilmyer, who describes herself as a chronically ill, happily disabled PhD working on archives, disability studies, natural history museums, and colonialism, [is calling for](#) contributions from disabled archivists & archival users about critical perspectives and approaches to the archival profession [for a forthcoming book](#) named *Preserving Disability: Disability and the Archival Profession*. Abstracts for that book are due by February 19 of next year if you are curious.

```
Version 4.0.1 Generic_50203-02 sun4m j386
$login: -flynn
11-03-1989 03:17 <DIR> Space Paranoids
11-03-1989 03:24 <DIR> Matrix Blaster
# bin/history
495  vi ~/last_will_and_testament.txt
496  cat /proc/meminfo
497  ps -a -x -u
498  kill -9 2207
499  kill 2208
500  ps -a -x -u
501  touch /opt/LLL/run/ok
502  LLL$D LaserControl -ok 1

# access arc
```

The Grid: Accessing archived data.

*The Grid declared at the beginning of Tron: Uprising episodes that “archived data” about the history of this computer world is being accessed. Sadly, it is the only time that archives have been mentioned in the series.*

There has been a lot of chatter about libraries on social media recently. It was sad to hear about the librarian [who was denied tenure](#), library administrators [screwing a union out of its win](#) for higher pay for librarians, that [it's good to know](#) your librarian, the introductory [chapter to a book](#) about zines in libraries being published, a librarian asking why they would be friends [with someone](#) who is doing their damndest to take away my rights, kill people with a plague, and is threatening to throw me in jail for the high crime of being a school librarian,” and [a library cataloger saying](#) that those librarians who believe that specific tasks like labeling, sorting, shelving, and so on are “beneath their paygrade” are annoying, and is [tied up](#) with professional identity of librarians. I’d read the replies to their tweets, as it is fascinating to see other perspectives, even some who say that librarians do those tasks to avoid other work.

There have been continued efforts to pull books out of school libraries, whether [Black queer memoirs](#) (*All Boys Aren't Blue*), [a queer handbook of sorts](#) (*The Book Is Gay*), and many others [about topics](#) such as “racial and gender equality, sexual orientation and abortion,” along with those [declared](#) as supposedly “obscene.” Library of Congress (LOC) had various articles of note. They [interviewed Erika Wesch](#), Herencia Crowdsourcing Intern, [Japan](#) in U.S. children’s books, FALQs about Greenlandic autonomy, government formation, and [mineral resource policy](#), [described](#) the preservation of World War II Pacific Theater relief maps, and explained the library’s [new Open Access Books Collection](#), with new books [added every day!](#)

*Hack Library School* had posts about going from [public to academic libraries](#) and about [on the job learning](#). Not surprising is [the story](#) of the Association of American Publishers (AAP) suing to stop the library e-book laws in Maryland and New York, with the Authors Guild, and others on the side of the AAP with the law requiring “publishers who offer to license e-books to consumers

in the state to also offer to license the works to libraries on "reasonable" terms." On a different topic, April Hathcock, in a June 2018 post, talked about her trip to the ALA, and at the time, [being hopeful](#), and hoping to change the ALA as a councilmember. By June of this year, her perspective had changed. [She described](#) the ALA as an organization that will (and has been) be "centered on promoting the "neutrality" of white supremacy and capitalism."

Speaking of the latter aspects of our current society, there was [a story](#), back in July, about seven people sent back to Canada after using a library lawn to enter the U.S. from Quebec, yet another example of overreach of immigration power and immigration restrictions. The library itself, the Haskell Free Library was, according to the article "deliberately built straddling the border in the early 20th century so people from both countries can use it," as the entrance is in Vermont, and before it was closed by the pandemic, "Canadians were allowed to enter the United States to visit the library without having to visit a customs post." Of course, that isn't allowed anymore, at least it doesn't seem that way, which is unfortunate.

On another topic, Emily Drabinski, Interim Chief at Mina Rees Library at The Graduate Center, CUNY, [is running](#) for the ALA presidency, arguing that "libraries are core to any vision of justice." The official website for her candidacy [says](#) that she will argue for a very progressive platform, one where the ALA advocates for "reinvestment in schools, libraries, and communities, economic and racial justice for library workers and the communities in which we live and work, environmental sustainability, and collaboration and cooperation beyond our borders." I wish her the best of luck in running for the ALA presidency and most definitely support her.



*Mrs. Joan Fertig, Hungarian-born librarian at the Westinghouse plant, 1943, cropped version of [Wikimedia copy of image](#); original from the Library of Congress*

That brings me to genealogy. *Genealogy* journal had articles about [Leoncia Lasalle's Slave Narrative](#) from Moca, Puerto Rico, [tribal health and wellness](#) through land-based healing, and transnational practices and emotional belonging [among early 20th-century Greek migrants](#) in the United States. Melanie Frick's *Homestead Genealogy* had posts about her ancestors [settling in Canada](#), a [photographic analysis](#), and [finding](#) your Danish immigrant ancestors.

There was also a genealogist relying their experience of a cousin [who declared](#) they were working for MyHeritage because they didn't answer fast enough, another [who asks](#) if you know the "stand" of your German farm ancestor (if you have one), and a third genealogist [that explains](#) how to use and find historical newspapers in your genealogy research. It was wonderful to hear that by the end of this year, the Internet Association [will be no more](#), as it organized against net neutrality, in favor of stronger laws to protect corporate property, and opposed laws to allow ride-sharing drivers to unionize, and supported Airbnb in San Francisco and Chicago when additional regulations were proposed.

That brings me to history. *The Art Newspaper* [had an article](#) about how 14 major museums in the U.S. were “caught up in a ‘morally dubious’ -tour of Germany’s art treasures after the Second World War,” LOC [wrote about Nicolò Paganini](#), which they called “virtuosic rock star of the 19th century,” Dawn Peterson wrote in *Southern Spaces* about [adoption and the politics](#) of Antebellum expansion, and Tahitia L. McCabe examined Americans and return migrants [in the 1881 Scottish census](#). Kelli Gibson [talked about protecting](#) the legacy of Nina Simone, Myers Reece [explained](#) what is included in the late Ed Gilliland’s extraordinary historical photo collection, specifically a “massive assortment of prints and negatives, including glass-plate negatives, a technique used before the invention of cellulose nitrate film in the early 1900s.” *Perspectives of History* noted [how to tell a narrative](#) through podcasting, and Erica X. Eisen [argued](#) that the failures in “prosecuting the businessmen who profited from the Nazi war machine show[s] just how far postwar Europe and America were willing to go in the Cold War quest to protect capitalism.”

*Imperial Global Exeter* had posts [about a law](#) to end decolonizing debates and [German colonialism](#). There are some good genealogy-related/history-related databases. One of those is named the [England’s Immigrants Database](#). It contains “over 64,000 names of people known to have migrated to England during the period of the Hundred Years’ War and the Black Death, the Wars of the Roses and the Reformation.” The other is [American September](#), a “documentary archive collecting memories of September 11th, 2001 from all 50 states and across the world.” In the former database, there is no mention of “packard,” although there is a [“Peter Padard.”](#)



Kukuru and Fuka together in the last episode of the artful, slice-of-life, but realistic, anime, *The Aquatope on the White Sand*

That brings me to other topics which are worth noting in this article but don’t fit neatly into the parts of this newsletter about archives, libraries, genealogy, or history. Starting with anime, CBR

had articles about [separated single working moms](#), the [strongest anime gun-slinging girls](#), and two about the *Adachi to Shimamura* light novels, asking why Shimamura is [so distant](#) and why Adachi's behavior [is toxic](#). There are assorted articles which named the top manga [in 2021](#) or an article [about the upcoming anime](#), *Vampire in the Garden*. Of these articles, it was fascinating to read about the latter anime, *Adachi to Shimamura, The Aquatope on White Sand* (which just concluded), and many others.

There is some other animation news. [Some noted](#) the trailer for the new series, *Moon Girl and Devil Dinosaur*, while others pointed to the creator of *Lumberjanes* [planning](#) a queer young adult take on *Sleepy Hollow*, and the second season of mature dark comedy web series *Helluva Boss* on its way, [sometime in 2022](#)! It was great to see that animation writers are fighting for better pay and working conditions, pushing a new deal in animation, [banding together](#) across the animation industry and trying to unionize. It's something I support.

There were other articles I came across this week. Some defined words like [metamours](#) (your lover's lover, i.e. husband's girlfriend), the [difference](#) between polyamory and polygamy, [misconceptions](#) about pansexuality, and the double-edged [sword](#) of relationship energy in polyamorous relationships. There was continuing discussion over [whether to use](#) the word "Hispanic," "Latino," "Latinx," or one I've started using, "Latine" for those from Latin American countries. There doesn't seem to be much support for using "Latinx," according to a new article [in NBC News](#).

I liked reading about [why book clubs](#) are said by some therapists to be an approved form of self-care, a review of a book about a prophet, assassins, and religious freedom [in the 1844 presidential election](#), the [travel of a book](#) from an ancient bog to a museum treasure, and a bestseller book comparing being trans [to pretending to be a walrus](#). The World Meteorological Organization [said](#) that record heat in June 2020 raises alarm bells about a changing climate. The Dictionary of the Spanish Language of the Royal Academy [added new words](#) like "New normality", "bot", "vaccinology", "transgender", "polyamory" or "worth mother," among many others.

*Yahoo! News* [reported](#) on a secret immigration control unit which investigates Americans, called Operation Whistle Pig, using databases to "obtain the travel records and financial and personal information of journalists, government officials, congressional members and their staff, NGO workers and others" with the main agent Jeffrey Rambo behind this declaring he did nothing wrong. Those at the Counter Network Division probably thought the same, while getting away with their illegal actions and facing no consequences whatsoever. I sure hope that Rambo loses his job over speaking to them over this. He needs to be fired and I'm glad people in the neighborhood where he has his coffee shop are pointing him out for the scum he is, and he should be afraid.

Otherwise, it was fascinating to read about [Afrodescendant women, witchcraft, and the remaking](#) of urban Cartagena, [whether searching](#) full text is more effective than searching abstracts, [transracial families](#), race, and Whiteness in Sweden, [the governor in Maine](#) who got rid of the "tampon tax," as some call it, a tax that in 32 states, "women's hygiene products (like

tampons, menstrual cups, and sanitary pads) [are subject](#) to a luxury tax placed on products or services deemed non-essential or unneeded," and [how wildfires](#) during Permian-Triassic transition caused vegetation change in ecosystem. Monica Muñoz Martinez & Karl Jacoby [argued in \*Public Books\*](#) that borders don't stop violence but rather create violence, connected to the history of racial violence [on the Mexico-Texas border](#), and Hathcock [noting](#) her issue with how "people with privilege and power enact so-called *empathy*," calling it oppressive empathy, and giving an example where an archivist asked people to feel empathy and understand a White medical doctor who had White supremacist beliefs. Yikes.

With that, let me move to the last part of this newsletter. As always, *The Nib* had wonderful illustrations. Some focused on Biden [getting a blank check](#) for military spending, [story of a White woman](#) who had a change of heart and stopped saying racist things to a Black nurse, the experience of living [in a spaceship](#), and [leaked hospital records](#) reveal huge, automated markups for healthcare. Others were about the last days of [people's lives](#), [the absurdity](#) of saying we are living in a computer simulation, the idea of "wide cars" to ["dominate"](#) the road, [the plots](#) of every Christmas commercial, and [the crumbling](#) of U.S. public transit. There are many more illustrations I'd include here, but I'll put them in next week's newsletter instead.

That's all for this week. I hope you all have a good week ahead!

- Burkely

# Archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and closing out the year

Happy end of year! In this special "too long for email" edition, I'll be discussing the latest news about archives, libraries, genealogy, history, and much more.

*[Newsletter originally published [on December 31, 2021](#)]*



Hope you are all having a happy winter break! On Monday, a [review I wrote](#) about the recent episode of a mature animated series, *Freak Brothers*, was published, while on Wednesday I [reviewed another webcomic](#) which I really enjoyed titled *She's a Keeper*, which I'd recommend reading. On Tuesday, I made [my last post for this year](#), on my blog, *Pop Culture Library Review* (renamed from *Libraries in Popular Culture*). I reviewed what I've posted in the last year, noting the most popular posts, some of my favorites, and much more! I previously posted a similar post [on my Wading Through the Cultural Stacks blog](#) last Thursday, and I will be trying to post on there at least once a month in order to keep it current. With that, let me move onto the rest of my newsletter.

Earlier this month, my colleagues at NSA published a post about [Anatoly Chernyaev's 1981 diary](#). They closed out the year by posting [about the demise](#) of the Soviet Union and the [earliest known](#) 2001 Afghanistan Strategy paper. At the same time, Samantha Cross reviewed archives in comics, [specifically focusing](#) on *Peritale* while the SAA Description section [shared](#) their new Steering Committee members, and Kyle Neill, Senior Archivist of Peel Archives brought back their series focusing on [archivists in Christmas movies](#). Their post highlighted record types shown in the films *The Christmas Chronicles*, *Die Hard*, *Die Hard 2*, *Arthur Christmas*, *Batman Returns*, *Home Alone 1* and *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*, and a Christmas comic book.

Of note were archivists writing about [cassette tapes](#), [microfilm](#), [photo storage](#), [book scanners](#), [preservation](#), [web archiving](#), and the “Main Stage” pilot program of the SNAP Section, an “open invitation to participate in a monthly series of presentations” [on archives-related topic](#). Other than some scattered tweets about whether Archive of Our Own is a library or an archive and the site’s structure (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), I loved [reading the interview](#) with Andrew Weymouth of the Washington State Fair Archives, how the archives of land artist Nancy Holt [are heading](#) to the Smithsonian. I also liked people [dunking on](#) Archive 81, arguing it will not be accurate when it comes to archives, even questioning [the idea](#) that people would restore damaged videotapes, [saying](#) it hurt their “archivist soul” when they watch it, and [asking](#) who served as consultants on the series. With a series like that, they probably consulted no one.

That brings me to libraries. Some in December wrote about handling school [while sick](#), school librarians and [challenges to books in Texas](#), [opposing](#) a wrongful book removal of LGBTQ book from a North Carolinian library, mobile libraries [in Afghanistan](#), [carrying accessibility forward](#), and [resisting](#) crisis surveillance capitalism in academic libraries. The Library of Congress (LOC) had posts about [the Great Lakes](#) (and lakes in other parts of the world) and [water resource occupations](#).

There were other articles of interest [about stories](#) which shaped 2021, how Snead bookshelves [made](#) big libraries in the U.S. possible, [confronting challenges](#) beyond book banning and challenges in library settings, and a look, if it can be guessed, of [possible futuristic libraries](#). There was [also a manual](#) distributed in July of this year about “intellectual freedom,” which seems to position libraries as neutral spaces, something which is unrealistic and dangerous for librarians. April Hathcock, on the other hand, [pointed out](#) that “the American Library Association is a big opaque beast” with the ALA Office of Intellectual Freedom welcoming hate groups to libraries, and wanting to “[keep libraries out of court](#).”



Laura Koenig and Jessi Snow talked books with teens at the Copley Library in Boston, MA, in 2013, [via Wikimedia](#)

There were also some who questioned whether there are librarians in *Brazil*, specifically Jonathan Pryce, a determination [which some](#) have criticized. Jennifer Snoek-Brown argued that Pryce is [an example](#) of a librarian as a failure in *Brazil*, while noting the film here, [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).

There are some worthwhile topics about genealogy to focus on in this newsletter. Other than [Leonardo Da Vinci's family tree](#), some have pointed to [common](#) genealogy mistakes, how the yearbooks from your past [might help](#) genealogists, searching for an ancestor who [was sent away](#), and [fur traders](#) in Canada. I liked reading the *Genealogy* magazine articles on topics such as colonization [in New South Wales](#), language, DNA, [and construction](#) of the African American/Dominican boundary of difference, and mothering infants [through a global pandemic](#).

With that, I move onto a related, but different subject: history. *Smithsonian* magazine had articles [about an early society](#) between the Black and Caspian Seas which disliked gold, a rare Viking sword unearthed [on a Scottish island](#), the [oldest evidence](#) of ancient humans altering the nature landscape, when human societies threw [Christmas parties for horses](#), and a trunk [containing Roman spoils of war](#) seized by Jewish rebels. There were also stories about the 10,000 year old burial of a baby [found in an Italian cave](#), an [old depiction of falconry](#) in Scandinavia unearthed, a locket that memorializes a Black activist couple murdered [in a Christmas 1951 bombing](#), and [ruins of a large Nubian church](#) found in Sudan.

There were other history-related articles about [the constitutional authority](#) of the Continental Congress, [North Carolina colonel](#) Joseph Williams in the Cherokee Campaign of 1776, walking Seattle's streets [a hundred years ago](#), [Ethelred the Unready](#), [colonialism and hookworm eradication](#) in Puerto Rico, and John George, Small but Powerful Character Actor who is unknown [to most classic film fans](#).



Some of my favorite anime of 2021. Left to right: *The Aquatope on the White Sand*, *Fena: Pirate Princess*, and *The Great Jahy Will Not Be Defeated!*

This brings me to the last part of this newsletter, focusing on topics which cannot easily fit into other sections. The first part is some of the best anime from this year. Apart from [Adachi to Shimamura](#) which was good but not my favorite, I am glad to see that *Komi Can't Communicate*, centered around a girl with social anxiety, [was renewed](#). I have to agree with [The Young Folks](#) that some of my favorite anime for this year included *The Aquatope on the White Sand*, and *Fena Pirate Princess*, while I also liked *Miss Kobayashi's Dragon Maid*, *My Next Life as a Villainess: All Roads Lead to Doom*, *The Great Jahy Will Not Be Defeated!*, *High Guardian Spice* (if it can be called an anime) as well.

That brings me to animation. News articles I read highlighted some of my favorite Western animation from this year, like [the second season](#) of *Star Trek: Lower Decks*, the Disney film *Encanto*, [mature animations](#) like *Trese*, *Arcane*, and *Inside Job*, along with ["kids" animations](#) like *Victor & Valentino*, *The Ghost and Molly McGee*, *Amphibia*, and *The Owl House*. There is also rumors of an animated *Tales of the Jedi* project which could be in the works according to [Brinkwire](#) and [Comicbook](#).

In terms of LGBTQ people, I loved seeing that Vixen was [turned into a lesbian](#) character in a comic based on the *Harley Quinn* animated series, and those noting webcomics like the wonderful *Mage & Demon Queen*, *Castle Swimmer*, and [many others](#). Others even [provided a review](#) of queer films and performances this year.

Beyond this were assorted articles about diverse characters in books, TV, and video games [for kids](#), the public health hazard [of "noble lies"](#) by health officials on COVID-19, [some urging](#) all adults to get booster shots (even though this would further result in wealthy countries hoarding vaccines for themselves), fossils from the world's first reefs [unearthed in Nevada](#), [disappearance](#) of wetland habitats, [unearthing](#) of hidden water on Mars, and the pronunciation of [the word "omicron."](#) Others focused on [deadnaming of trans students](#) in schools, [ways of](#) protecting biomedical data from hackers, creating a [unique character voice](#), and [systemic inequalities](#) in indoor air pollution in London.

Finally, there are wonderful illustrations in *The Nib*. Some focused a closeted lesbian using a person [as a casualty](#) of their shame, [how to celebrate](#) the New Year like the Swiss, the horribleness [of this year](#), the CDC continuing [to undermine itself](#), [supposedly](#) “basic safety” of Amazon, [humans ruining](#) the planet, and [the great thaw](#) of ice which is already happening. I liked reading about [covering up](#) hateful tattoos, [cognitive dissonance](#), [looting](#), conservative [hypocrisy](#), [catalytic converters](#) and the black market, speaking [about abortion](#), [coming out](#) as trans, and conservatives [covering up](#) their lavish lifestyles.

That's all for this newsletter. See you all in 2022!

- Burkely